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NATHAN THE WISE.

NATHAN THE WISE

A Dramatic Poem

BY

LESSING

[redacted]

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BLANK VERSE

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

LESSING may well claim the honour of having been the regenerator of German literature—of having, in fact, inaugurated its Augustan age; that age which was illustrated by Lessing himself, by Wieland, and Goethe, and Schiller, and Bürger, and Jean Paul Richter, and the Schlegels, and other eminent writers. The stilted, cramped, artificial French style, which in the times previous to the advent of Lessing had found favour in Germany, disappeared under the powerful suasion of his criticisms, which were characterized not less by their ability, taste, and incisiveness, than by that free out-spokenness which earned for him as a critic the appellation of 'the freest of the free.' He himself had drunk deep at the fountain of English poetry, and in Shakespeare especially he had sought

and found the poet of nature *par excellence*, who represented men and women as they are, and who made them in their respective spheres and conditions speak and act as we should expect each man and woman to speak and act. From that time forward, greatly owing to the influence of Lessing's writings, Shakespeare became the peculiar study and model of German writers, and the peculiar favourite of the German nation, by whom, to say the least, he is quite as much admired and understood as by his own countrymen.

Lessing, we have said, was a great critic,—one whose criticisms were as versatile as they were able, embracing as they did the departments of the drama, of art, and of general literature; but he was not content, as many critics have been, only with forming judgments of the writings of others. He has left behind him works of his own entitling him to take, if not the first rank amongst the authors of his nation, at all events a rank little below the first rank.

It is not my intention here, even if my limits allowed of it, to enter at length into the merits of Lessing as the author of many valuable works which have taken their place, and that a high place, in

the classical literature of Germany. I have only made these few cursory remarks as a prelude to what I have to say regarding what, by general consent, has been considered his *chef-d'œuvre*, viz. his 'dramatic poem,' as he himself terms it, *Nathan der Weise*, Nathan the Wise. Of it I have in all humility attempted in the following pages a translation into English blank verse. If it may appear presumptuous, if not a work of supererogation, in me to undertake a new translation of this great drama, seeing that that able translator from the German, the late Mr. William Taylor of Norwich, now many years ago published his translation of *Nathan*, I can only say that, having carefully perused that work, I am satisfied that there is room for other translations which may perhaps more faithfully and fully reflect the author's language and sentiments than does that of Mr. Taylor. His version has doubtless very considerable merit, still it cannot be denied that there are in it various blemishes, and some omissions as well as mistranslations, which seem to me, at least, to mar its efficiency as a thorough rendering of Lessing's drama. I have therefore felt encouraged to publish another version,

at the same time that I frankly acknowledge, as I am bound to do, that I owe to Mr. Taylor the correction of some errors into which I had myself fallen in interpreting a work so difficult in many respects to render into English as Lessing's *Nathan* unquestionably is.

Even at a very early period of his literary career, Lessing had conceived the idea, which not till near the close of his life was fully developed and embodied in the drama of *Nathan the Wise*. It was first suggested to him by one of the stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Third Novel, 1st day), a translation of which I think it important to introduce here, as aiding the elucidation of Lessing's drama. Though the quotation be rather long, I give the story entire, in order that it may be seen how Lessing turned it to such good account, and how he, even as our own Shakespeare did with the materials which formed the groundwork of his plays, so treated the subject as to give the impress of his genius to what, in less gifted hands, could not have been so utilized. Boccaccio's story is as follows:—

'Saladin was so great and brave a man that he

had raised himself from an inconsiderable position to be Sultan of Babylon, and had gained many victories over both Turkish and Christian princes. This monarch having in divers wars and by many extraordinary expenses run through all his treasures, it fell out that on some urgent occasion he was in want of a large sum of money. Not knowing how he might raise enough to answer his necessities, he at last called to mind a rich Jew of Alexandria, named Melchisedech, who lent money at interest. Him he believed to have wherewithal to serve him; but then the Jew was so covetous that he would never do it willingly, and he was unwilling to force him. But as necessity has no law, after thinking much in what way the matter might best be effected, he at last resolved to use force under some colour of reason. He therefore sent for and received him in a most gracious manner; and making him sit down, he thus addressed him: "Honest man, I hear from divers persons that thou art very wise and knowing in religious matters; wherefore I would gladly know from thee which of these religions thou judgest to be the true one, viz. the Jewish, the Mahometan, or the Christian?" The Jew, truly

a wise man, found that Saladin had a mind to entrap him; and perceiving that he must gain his point should he prefer any one religion, after considering a little how best to avoid the snare, his invention at last supplied him with the following answer:—"The question which your highness has proposed is very curious, and that I may give you my sentiments, I must beg leave to tell a short story. I remember often to have heard of a great and rich man, who, among his most rare and precious jewels, had a ring of exceeding great beauty and value; and being proud of possessing a thing of such worth, and desirous that it should continue for ever in his family, he declared by will that to whichsoever of his sons he should give this ring, him he designed for his heir, and that he should be respected as the head of the family. That son to whom the ring was given made the same law in respect to his descendants, and the ring passed from one to another, in a long succession, till it came to a person who had three sons, all virtuous and dutiful to their father, and all equally beloved by him. The young men, knowing what depended on the ring, and ambitious of superiority, began to entreat their father, who

was now growing old, every one for himself, that he would give the ring to him. The good man, equally fond of all, was at a loss which to prefer; and as he had promised all, and being anxious to satisfy all, privately got an artist to make two other rings, which were so like the first that he himself scarcely knew the true one, and at his death gave one privately to each of his sons. They afterwards all claimed the honour and estate, each disputing them with his brothers, and producing his ring; and the rings were found so much alike that the true one could not be distinguished. To law then they went as to which should succeed, nor is that yet decided. And thus it has happened, my lord, with regard to the three laws given by God the Father, concerning which you proposed your question. Every one believes that he is the true heir of God, has his law, and obeys his commandments; but which is the right is uncertain in like manner as of the rings."

'Saladin perceived that the Jew had escaped the net which was spread for him; he therefore resolved to unfold his necessity to him, to see if he would lend him money, telling him at the same time what he designed to have done, had not his discreet

answer prevented him. The Jew freely supplied him with what he wanted; Saladin afterwards paid him with a great deal of honour, made him large presents, besides maintaining him nobly at his court, 'and was his friend as long as he lived.'

This story of Boccaccio's, Lessing has incorporated in his drama, though he has considerably altered and improved upon it, and the most striking and telling scene of the whole drama unquestionably is that (Act III. Sc. 7) where Saladin hears the story, thus altered, extended, and improved, related by the Jew Nathan as his exposition of his principles of universal toleration in religion. The drama is in fact—it was so meant—a peg whereon Lessing desired to hang an exposition of his own love of religious freedom and toleration, and of his own hatred of religious exclusiveness and intolerance. That he should have chosen a Jew in the person of Nathan the Wise as his expositor, is probably mainly due to the fact that his most valued and attached friend was Mendelssohn, the philosopher, who holds a high place in German literature, and whose name in later days was so highly illus-

trated in his descendant the great musical composer.

Lessing, who, we have every reason to believe, was familiar with the works of our own poet Pope, might very appropriately have taken as a motto for his drama those well-known and oft-quoted lines in the *Essay on Man*:

> 'For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right;
> In faith and hope the world will disagree,
> But all mankind's concern is charity!
> All must be false that thwart this one great end:
> And all of God that bless mankind, or mend.'

Lessing had evidently no faith in the dogmas of any positive religion. During almost the whole of his literary career, which was one of continuous struggle even to the bitter end with adverse circumstances, which it may fairly be said were in no small measure the result of his own line of conduct, he was much occupied with controversies with theologians. He knew that his out-spokenness in this respect had militated greatly against his worldly prosperity; but knowing this, and knowing that the publication of *Nathan* would subject him to severe criticisms from theologians, and that it might

possibly cost him the loss of his situation of Librarian at Wolfenbüttel, the paltry salary attached to which office constituted the chief means of his scanty subsistence; yet did Lessing, still showing himself to the end 'the freest of the free,' resolve to publish *Nathan* at all hazards. It was near the close of his life, for he only survived the publication three years; and so poor were his circumstances then, that he could not have brought it out but for subscriptions obtained with difficulty by soliciting his friends. Especially was he aided by the liberality of a Jew called Moses Wessely, who was himself by no means a rich man. He had intended in a second edition to have added a prologue and an epilogue, but he did not live to see a second edition. He had little or no expectation that it would ever be acted on the stage, nor, indeed, would one *à priori* have expected from its subject and its didactic character that it was calculated to become a popular acting drama; nevertheless, not long after Lessing's death it was successfully put on the stage, judiciously curtailed by Schiller, and now, after the lapse of a century, it has continued, no less than the comedy of *Minna von Barnhelm* and

the tragedy of *Emilia Galotti*, his two other most esteemed dramas, to maintain its popularity. The part of Nathan has been, and still I believe is, a favourite one with some of the most distinguished actors of Germany.

When compared with the dramas of Schiller and of Goethe, Lessing's *Nathan* would seem to lack poetic fire, nay, even at times to verge on the prosaic; yet it is full of fine sentiments nervously expressed, and the characters in the drama are well conceived and sustained throughout; though it must be confessed that the story is, to say the least, very improbable.

Lessing's Jew Nathan is a striking contrast to Shylock, 'the Jew whom Shakespeare drew.' Both of them had suffered cruelty and indignity at the hands of Christians; Nathan's wrongs had been in an especial manner dreadful, seeing that his wife and seven promising sons had been massacred in cold blood by Christians so called. But in Nathan's case that ill-treatment had been repaid by generosity, forgiveness, and kindness, carried even to the extent of adopting and bringing up as his own daughter a Christian child which had been com-

mitted to his care. In Shylock's case it had been repaid by a cruel vindictiveness which knew no bounds. Both of them had amassed great wealth: in Nathan's case that wealth had been made the means of liberally diffusing blessings to all around, irrespective of creed; in Shylock's case it was hoarded up with miserly avarice, and became a source of constant uneasiness and dread, and proved to its wretched owner neither blessed nor a blessing. Nathan was gentle, mild, and intelligent, and well deserved the epithets good and wise, which were bestowed upon him by all classes, for he was universally beloved. Shylock, on the contrary, was violent, infuriated, selfish, and unreasoning, and had become an object of hate to all with whom he came in contact.

As there are Jews and Jews, it is but too true that there are Christians and Christians. There are Christians so called, Christians in nought but the name, who by their life and conversation bring discredit on the Christianity which they profess; and there are genuine Christians, who endeavour as far as fallible human nature will allow to act up to the precepts and example of the divine Founder

of their faith, and thereby illustrate Christianity, whose blessed fruits they enjoy themselves and seek to impart to others.

In the Patriarch of Lessing's drama, we have a striking example of a thorough bigoted Christian, if Christian he may be called, of the fire-and-faggot school, who is destitute of Christian charity and ready to persecute even to the death those who do not conform to his notions of Christianity;—singular notions, truly, seeing that they sanction falsehood, deception, cruelty, even murder, in order to accomplish (save the mark!) holy ends. A marked contrast to this unchristian Christian is to be found in the simple, meek, uncultivated, but truly pious Lay-Brother, who is by far the most estimable character in the drama. Whilst compelled by circumstances to obey the odious behests of his superior, the unscrupulous Patriarch, yet he fails not to show on all occasions his detestation of the Patriarch's unchristian conduct, and in his own words and actions to testify the sincerity, devotion, and practical efficacy of his own faith as a Christian. In old Daja, the devoted companion from her childhood up of Recha, the reputed daughter of Nathan,

we have an example of a well-meaning but officious and manœuvring Christian, who, knowing the real circumstances of Recha's history, is bent *bon-gré mal-gré* on rescuing Recha from the risk of Judaism, especially by bringing about a match between her and the Templar, and of restoring Recha as well as herself—for she is not altogether disinterested in her acts—to Christian Europe.

In Recha we have a singularly artless, virtuous, affectionate, albeit imaginative girl, who, though unknown to herself a baptized Christian, has been brought up by Nathan as his adopted daughter in his home, but untutored in any particular creed. Living apart from the world, she has had no experience of mankind; and when rescued from a terrible death by fire by the handsome young Templar, her imagination makes her picture him as an angel. She reminds us somewhat of Miranda in Shakespeare's *Tempest.* Possibly Lessing may have had in his mind, when he so pictured Recha's imaginings, Miranda's exclamation when she first sees Ferdinand:

> 'What is 't? a spirit?
> Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,
> It carries a brave form:—but 'tis a spirit.'

Prospero's reply is not unlike Nathan's:

> 'No, wench: it eats and sleeps, and hath such senses
> As we have, such.'

And then Miranda rejoins, like Recha:

> 'I might call him
> A thing divine, for nothing natural
> I ever saw so noble.'

In the Templar we have a fiery, wayward, impetuous, brave young man, whose Christianity sits as loosely upon him as does his white mantle bearing upon it the red cross. His apparently rude conduct in the earlier scenes is explained by his feeling that he has fallen in love with a Jewish girl, and the consequent struggle to emancipate himself, if possible, from a position so anomalous considering that he is a Templar. As might be expected of him, he rejects with scorn and indignation the Patriarch's proposals, that he should take advantage of his position to act as a spy upon the Moslems, and make the knowledge so acquired available to the Crusading army, and that he should even compass the life of Saladin, whose captive he had been, but by whom his life had been mercifully spared. It is disappointing to

those who look for a marriage as the natural conclusion of a drama which is not tragic, to find that in the end, the Templar and Recha turn out to be brother and sister, as well as the nephew and niece of Saladin.

With regard to the Moslem element in this drama, we have three well-drawn characters in the Sultan Saladin, his sister the Princess Sittah, and Al-Hafi, the Dervish. Saladin is brave, hasty, and impulsive, but generous in his charities even to extravagance, so as to cripple the resources necessary for the requirements of his dominions. If he has been truly described by historians, and especially that great master of fiction, our own Sir Walter Scott, in his splendid romance of *The Talisman*, he was of a far more kindly and amiable nature than many of those Crusaders who went to the Holy Land to expel the infidel. Still, if we take Lessing's delineation of him as true, he was not altogether of so mild a disposition, being merciless, in general, to Christian captives who fell into his hands. Sittah his sister is clever, prudent, highly intellectual, and affectionate, but very devoted, even bigoted, to her Moslem faith, and very contemptuous in her

opinions and expressions regarding Christianity and Christians. Al-Hafi is a rugged but honest and outspoken Dervish, with, as his unlimited master-passion, a love of chess. The handsome dress and fixed position of Treasurer in Saladin's household, to which office by a strange freak of fortune he had been appointed, suit not his views; these he is fain to exchange for his old rags and wandering habits as a poor Dervish; but he dreads for his wealthy friend, the Jew Nathan, that he should be called upon to replace him in his office at Saladin's court, and there in order to supply Saladin's extravagant generosity he should be shorn eventually piecemeal of his wealth. To obviate such an event, the honest, good-hearted fellow does not scruple to dissemble, though contrary to his nature.

The termination of the drama is abrupt, shall we say rather unsatisfactory. No one dies, no one is married. All Daja's plotting for a union between the Templar and Recha is of course, in consequence of the discoveries as to their real history, brought to nought. The play ends with a general round of congratulations. Nathan is, after all, not separated from his adopted daughter Recha, whom he has

loved so well, and by whom he in return is so fondly loved. He can now breathe freely when disembarrassed of that painful secret which has so long weighed upon his mind and conscience, viz. the consciousness of having brought up in his house, though himself a Jew, a baptized Christian child, and the consequent constant fear of discovery and its consequences. The Templar and Recha, though in the case of the former with some little hesitation at first, rejoice in being restored to one another as loving brother and sister. Saladin and Sittah rejoice in finding, in two such handsome and lovable beings, the children of a dear brother whom they had loved and lost. We may hope that the excellent pious Lay-Brother, emancipated from the galling hypocritical bondage of the Patriarch, has at last found that peaceful rest for his latter days, which he so earnestly desired, in a hermitage on Mount Tabor. Doubtless Al-Hafi, having gone, as he indicates in the play, to the banks of the Ganges, and spending there a free, nomadic, but congenial life with his Ghebers, has been enabled to find along with freedom continual diversion in his favourite chess.

In conclusion, we may say that, whatever were the

religious views of Lessing, and whatever his object in writing his drama, no sincere Christian is at all likely to have his faith shaken from the perusal of *Nathan the Wise.* He may, indeed, learn some useful lessons, and chiefly that of toleration; and not merely toleration, but kindness and charity to all his brethren of mankind, be their creed what it may. This is surely a fundamental maxim of real Christianity. The picture drawn by Lessing of the Patriarch, which doubtless had too often its counterpart in bygone ages, and which in some degree in our own days is not, alas! quite a mere memory, will tend to confirm the true Christian in his repudiation of the right of men, calling themselves Christians, to behave in an unchristian way to those who are without, or even, may we not add, to those who are within the pale of Christianity, but of a different sect or denomination from themselves. From the contemplation of the character of Nathan, albeit a Jew, though one whom we may term a catholic Jew, and one who most certainly was a virtuous, prudent, humble, generous, forgiving man, even the Christian may derive a lesson, and may be stimulated to testify, perhaps more than ever he has done before,

by his life, conversation, and actions, his desire to conform more closely to the Christian standard,—one which inculcates all virtues, but emphatically the doctrine of universal love, and is infinitely exalted above the standard of all other religions which now exist or ever have existed on the earth.

NATHAN THE WISE.

'Introite, nam et hic Dii sunt.'
—*Apud Gellium.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE SULTAN SALADIN.

SITTAH, *his Sister.*

NATHAN, *a rich Jew of Jerusalem.*

RECHA, *his adopted Daughter.*

DAJA, *a Christian Woman residing in the house of Nathan as companion to Recha.*

CONRAD, *a young Templar.*

AL-HAFI, *a Dervish.*

BONA-FIDES, *a Lay Brother.*

THE PATRIARCH *of Jerusalem.*

THE EMIR MANSOR, *with several Mamelukes of the Sultan Saladin.*

The Scene is at Jerusalem.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Entrance-hall in Nathan's house.

Enter NATHAN, *arriving from travel;* DAJA *comes forth to meet him.*

DAJA.

'Tis he! Nathan!—Eternal thanks to God
That you've once more return'd to us at last.

NATHAN.

Yes, Daja; thanks to God! yet why '*at last*'?
Did I then purpose sooner to return?
Nay, could I have so done? For Babylon
Is from Jerusalem—as I my way
Now here, now there, have been compell'd to take—
Miles full two hundred; and debts to collect
Is surely not a business which so speeds
That it can be accomplish'd thus off-hand.

DAJA.

How miserable, Nathan, the meanwhile
Might you not here have been! Your house . . .

NATHAN.

Was burnt,—
That I've already heard.—God grant that I
Already all have heard!

DAJA.

And easily
It might have been e'en to the ground burnt down.

NATHAN.

Then, Daja, we a new one would have built,
One more convenient, too.

DAJA.

That's true indeed!—
The fate of being burnt to death with it
Recha but by a hair-breadth did escape.

NATHAN.

My Recha burnt to death?—That heard I not.—
I should have needed then a house no more.—
Escaped but by a hair-breadth!—Ha, 'tis so!
She has indeed been burnt to death!—Speak out!
Out with it!—Kill me: torture me no longer.
Yes, she was burnt to death.

DAJA.

If it were so,
Would you from me have heard it?

NATHAN.

Wherefore then
Me do you terrify?—Recha! my Recha!

DAJA.

Yours? Your Recha?

NATHAN.

O! were I e'er compell'd
To cease to call this child *my* child!

DAJA.

Then all,
That you possess, call you with as much right
Your own?

NATHAN.

Nothing with greater? For all else
Which I possess has been on me bestow'd
By nature and by fortune. I've to thank
Virtue alone for this possession.

DAJA.

Ah!
How dear you make me pay your kindness, Nathan!
If kindness, for such purpose exercised,
Can still be kindness call'd!

NATHAN.

How?—For such purpose?

DAJA.

My conscience . . .

NATHAN.

Daja, let me first of all
Recount to you . . .

DAJA.

My conscience, I repeat.

NATHAN.

What beauteous silk-stuff I at Babylon
Have bought for you—so rich—tasteful and rich!
Scarce prettier what I bring for Recha's self.

DAJA.

What boots it! For my conscience, I to you
Must only say, no longer will be lull'd.

NATHAN.

And how the ear-rings, bracelets, and the ring
And chain, which in Damascus I for you
Sought out, will charm you,—*that* I long to see!

DAJA.

Thus 'tis with you! If you can only give!
Can only give!

NATHAN.

Accept as willingly
As I these give you, Daja:—and be silent!

DAJA.

Be silent!—Nathan, who can doubt that you
Are honour's self, and generosity?
And yet . . .

NATHAN.

I'm but a Jew.—That would you say?
Is it not so?

DAJA.

What 'tis that I would say
You better know.

NATHAN.

Be silent then!

DAJA.

I'm silent;
What hereby happens culpable 'fore God,
And which I nor can hinder, nor can change,—
That fall on you!

NATHAN.

Upon me let it fall!—
But where is she? where does my Recha tarry?
If you're deceiving me!—Does she then know
That I am come?

DAJA.

That must I ask of you!
Still trembles she with terror through each nerve,
Still paints her fancy fire in all it paints.
In sleep her spirit wakes, awake it sleeps:
Now less than animal, now more than angel.

NATHAN.

Alas! alas! poor child! what are we mortals!—

DAJA.

This morning long with closèd eyes she lay,
And was as dead. Sudden she started up,
And cried: 'Hark! hark! there come my father's camels!
Hark! his soft voice itself!' Again her eyes
She oped: her head, losing her arm's support,
Sunk on the pillow.—To the gate I run!
And there, behold! in very truth you come!
What wonder! her whole soul was all the time
Only with you—and him.—

NATHAN.

With him? what him?

DAJA.

With him who from the fire did rescue her.

NATHAN.

Who was that? who?—and where is he? who was't
That saved for me my Recha? Tell me: who?

DAJA.

'Twas a young Templar, who, some days before,
Had been brought here a captive, and to whom
The Sultan Saladin had mercy shown.

NATHAN.

How so? A Templar, whose life Saladin
Had spared? My God! through a less miracle
Could Recha not be saved?

DAJA.

Yes! But for him,
Who his unlook'd for gain ventured afresh,
She had been lost.

NATHAN.

Where is this noble man?—
Where is he, Daja? Lead me to his feet.
You gave to him the treasures I had left you?
You gave him all? You promised more? far more?

DAJA.

How could we?

NATHAN.

Did you not? O did you not?

DAJA.

He came, no one knows whence. He went away,
No one knows whither.—Boldly on he rush'd,—
Knowing nought of the house, but by his ear
Guided alone, his cloak 'fore him outspread,—
Boldly through flame and smoke seeking the voice,
Which shriek'd to us for help. Already we
Held him for lost,—when from out smoke and flame
He all at once before us stood, and her

In his strong arm he bore. Cold and unmoved
By our loud thanks, there lays he down his prize,
Then rushes through the throng, and—disappears.

NATHAN.

Not, I will hope, for ever.

DAJA.

Some days after
We saw him 'neath the palms, which shade the grave
Of THE UPRISEN, wandering up and down.
Delighted I approach'd him—him I thank'd,
Him I extoll'd, entreated, nay conjured,—
To see but once again the gentle creature,
Who could not rest, till at his feet her thanks
She had wept out.

NATHAN.

Well, Daja!

DAJA.

'Twas in vain!
To our entreaties he was deaf; and pour'd
Especially on me such bitter scorn . . .

NATHAN.

Till thus discouraged . . .

DAJA.

Anything but that!
I met him every day anew; but he
On every day renew'd his scorn of me.
What bore I not from him! what would I not
Still willingly have borne!—but now for long
He comes no more to visit here those palms
Which shade the grave of our UPRISEN ONE;

And no one knows where he abides.—You marvel?
You 're rapt in thought?

NATHAN.

I inly meditate
What an impression on a mind like Recha's
Such conduct must produce. To find herself
Thus scornfully disdain'd by him, whom she
Must feel constrain'd so highly to esteem;
And so repell'd, and yet attracted so!—
Truly 'twixt heart and head there must arise
A long dispute whether misanthropy
Or melancholy shall prevail; yet oft
Neither the victory gains; and phantasy,
Which mingles in the strife, enthusiasts makes,
In whom 'tis now the head which of the heart,
And now the heart which of the head must play
The part.—Evil exchange!—The last, I wot,
Is Recha's case; she 's an enthusiast.

DAJA.

Yet one so modest, and so amiable!

NATHAN.

Still an enthusiast!

DAJA.

Well there 's one—
Whim, call it if you will,—that 's by her cherish'd.
Her Templar is to her no earthly being
And of no earthly being born; he is
One of those angels, to whose guardianship
Her little heart, e'en from her childhood up,
So fondly thought that she entrusted was,

And who from out his cloud, in which he erst
Was veil'd, still also e'en amidst the fire
Around her hover'd, and who all at once
Came forth as Templar.—Nay smile not!—Who knows?
Or if you 'll smile leave her at least a dream—
A dream, in which Jew, Christian, Mussulman
Agree together,—O so sweet a dream!

NATHAN.

Also to me so sweet!—Good Daja! go;
See what she does; if I can speak with her.
This wild, capricious guardian angel then
I will search out; and if he still is pleased
Amongst us here below to dwell; if still
He 's pleased a knighthood so unmannerly
To exercise; I 'll surely find him out,
And bring him hither.

DAJA.

Much you undertake.

NATHAN.

Then the sweet dream gives place to sweeter truth.
For trust me, Daja, dearer than an angel,
A mortal to a mortal ever is—
You 'll not be angry with me, if you see
Th' angel-enthusiast to health restored?

DAJA.

You are so good, at the same time so arch!
I go!—yet lo! see! there she comes herself.

Scene II.

Recha—Daja—Nathan.

RECHA.

And so 'tis you in very truth, my father!
That your voice only you had sent before
Methought. Where tarry you? what hills, what deserts,
What rivers still us separate? You breathe
While there between us only is a wall,
Yet hasten not your Recha to embrace?
Your Recha, your poor Recha, who meanwhile
Was burnt to death!—almost!—only almost.
Nay shudder not! Ah! to be burnt to death!
That were a dreadful fate.

NATHAN.

My darling child!

RECHA.

You must have cross'd Euphrates, Tigris, Jordan;
I know not all what streams you must have cross'd?
For you how oft I've trembled ere the fire
So nigh me came! For since so nigh me came
That fire, to die in water were, methinks,
Revival, solace, yea deliverance.—
Yet you have not been drown'd; nor I been burnt.
How will we then rejoice, and praise our God!
He on the wings of *unseen* angels bore
You and your boat across the treacherous streams;

He to my angel sign'd, that *visible*
On his white wing he through the fire should bear me . . .

NATHAN (*aside*).

(White wing! yes, yes! it was the Templar's cloak—
White and 'fore him outspread.)

RECHA.

That visible
He through the fire, should bear me on his wing.
I 've therefore seen an angel face to face;
My angel.

NATHAN.

Recha were well worthy that;
And she in him would nothing lovelier see,
Than he in her.

RECHA (*smiling*).

Whom flatter you, my father?
Whom? is't the angel? or is't you yourself?

NATHAN.

Had it been but a man—a mortal man—
A man, such as Dame Nature daily gives—
Who had this service render'd thee: he must
For thee have been an angel—must and would.

RECHA.

Not such an angel, no!—a real one;
A real angel certainly it was!—
Have you not taught me that 'tis possible
That there are angels, and that the great God
Can for the good of those, who do him love,
Work wonders? Him I love.

NATHAN.

And He loves thee;
And hourly He for thee, and those like thee,
Works wonders; yea, from all eternity
Already He has wonders work'd for thee

RECHA.

That hear I gladly.

NATHAN.

How? because it sounds
Quite natural, a thing of every day,—
That thee a real Templar should have saved;
Should it on that account be less a wonder?—
The greatest wonder is, that real wonders
To us so common can, and should become.
But for this universal miracle
A thinker scarcely would have term'd a wonder,
What must by children merely so be call'd,
Who gaping follow only after what
Is most extraordinary, and most new.

DAJA (*to Nathan*).

And would you then by subtleties like these
Her brain, already overstrain'd, o'erthrow?

NATHAN.

Leave me alone!—Was it not for my Recha
Wonder enough, that her a man has saved,
Whom no small miracle must first have saved?
Yea, no small miracle! For who e'er heard
That Sultan Saladin a Templar spared?
That e'er a Templar to be spared by him
Or sought, or hoped? e'er for his freedom offer'd

More than the leathern belt, which bears his sword,
And at the most his dagger?

RECHA.

Ah! my father,
That argues in my favour.—Therefore he
No real Templar was, only seem'd so.—
If in Jerusalem no captive Templar
Comes but to certain death; if none so free
Goes 'bout Jerusalem: how on that night
Could one have volunteer'd my life to save?

NATHAN.

See, how ingenious she is! Now, Daja,
Resume your story. I've already heard
That he was hither as a captive sent;
You without doubt know more.

DAJA.

O yes, I do.—
It is so said indeed;—yet also said
That to the Templar Saladin show'd mercy
Because of this: that he resembled so
One of his brothers whom he dearly loved.
Yet since that brother died 'tis twenty years,—
His name I know not,—where he died I know not;—
So utterly incredible it sounds,
That probably the whole affair is naught.

NATHAN.

Why, Daja, is it so incredible?
Would you—as happens oft—that disbelieve,
And rather trust what's more incredible?
Wherefore should Saladin, who his whole kin

So loves, not in his younger days have loved
In an especial manner one dear brother?
Are not two faces apt to be alike?—
And is an old impression one that's lost?—
And does the like no longer cause the like?
Since when?—Where lies here the incredible?—
Surely, wise Daja, 'tis for you no longer
A wonder; and *your* wonders only need—
Deserve, I should have said, belief.

DAJA.

You mock me!

NATHAN.

Nay you mock me.—Yet, Recha, even still
Does thy deliverance remain a wonder
That's only possible to Him who turns,
With ease and by the slenderest threads, of kings
The firmest resolutions, and designs
The most unbridled,—yea of kings who are
His sport, if not the objects of his scorn.

RECHA.

Father, dear father! if indeed I err,
You know that 'tis not wilfully I err.

NATHAN.

Nay, rather wouldst thou willingly be taught.—
Behold! a brow that thus or thus is arch'd;
A nose whose bridge thus more than thus is raised;
Eyebrows which on a sharp, or blunt bone wind;
A line, a curve, a fold, an angle, nothing,
On a wild European's countenance;—
And thou escap'st the fire, in Asia!

Is that no wonder, wonder-seeking folk?
Why then take pains an angel to enlist?

DAJA.

What harm—if I may speak—is there withal
That she should think that by an angel rather
Than by a mortal man she has been saved?
Feels she not thus much nearer the first cause
Th' incomprehensible—of her escape?

NATHAN.

Pride! nought but pride! The iron pot
Would with the silver tongs from off the fire
Be lifted, so that it may think itself
A pot of silver.—Pshaw!—You ask, What harm?
What harm?—What use? I in return might ask.—
For your 'that one may feel the nearer God,'
Is either nonsense, or 'tis blasphemy.—
But it does harm; yes, certainly does harm.—
Come! listen to me, then.—Is it not true
That to that being—be he man or angel—
Who saved her,—both of you—(*to* RECHA) thou specially,
Would willingly much and great service do?
Is it not so?—Well, to an angel,—say:
What service, what great service could you do?
Him you could thank; to him could sigh, could pray;
And over him could melt in ecstasy;
On his fête-day could fast; could alms bestow—
But all for nothing.—For methinks hereby
You and your neighbours gain much more than he.
He through your fasts will not grow fat; nor rich

Through your expenditure; he 'll not become
Through your delight in him more glorious;
Nor through your confidence more powerful.
Is not that true? But if he be a man!—

DAJA.

Were he a man, more opportunity
We would have had something to do for him.
God knows how ready for that task we were!
But nought at all he wish'd for, needed nought;
Was in himself and with himself content,
As only angels are—or e'en can be.

RECHA.

At last when he had vanish'd .

NATHAN.

Vanish'd?—how?—
Under the palms lets he himself be seen
No longer?—How is this? have you indeed
Made wider search for him?

DAJA.

No; we have not.

NATHAN.

Have you not, Daja? have you not?—behold
How wrong it is!—Cruel enthusiasts!—
Suppose this angel should have sick become! . . .

RECHA.

Sick!

DAJA.

Sick! O no, not so!

RECHA.

What a cold shudder

Comes o'er me!—Daja!—My brow once so warm
Is all at once—just feel it!—icy cold.

NATHAN.

He is a Frank, and to this climate strange!
He's young; and to the work so hard, the fasts,
The vigils of his Order, not inured.

RECHA.

Sick! sick!

DAJA.

Nay, Nathan only meant to say
That that is possible.

NATHAN.

Now there he lies!
With neither friend, nor money to buy friends.

RECHA.

O father!

NATHAN.

There he lies un-nursed, without advice,
Uncomforted, a prey to pain, e'en death!

RECHA.

Where? where?

NATHAN.

He who for one whom he ne'er knew,
Ne'er saw—enough, it was a human being—
Into the fire rush'd headlong . . .

DAJA.

Nathan, spare her!

NATHAN.

Who, what he saved, would neither nearer know,
Nor further see, to spare himself the thanks . . .

DAJA.

O spare her, Nathan!

NATHAN.

He had no de...

To see her more, unless that he again
A second time might save her—for enough,
It was a human being . . .

DAJA.

Cease! behold her!

NATHAN.

He who when dying to console him has
Nothing—but of this deed the consciousness . . .

DAJA.

Cease! you are killing her!

NATHAN.

You have kill'd him!
Or might have so kill'd him. O Recha! Recha!
Medicine not poison do I give to thee.
He lives!—Come to thyself!—He 's not e'en sick;
No, he 's not sick!—

RECHA.

Art sure?—not dead? not sick?

NATHAN.

Surely not dead! For God e'en here rewards
Good deeds done here.—Go!—Comprehendest thou
How easier far 's devout fanaticism,
Than to do good? and how the idlest man
Would fain turn fanatic—only that he—
Albeit at times unconscious of his object—
Only that he may need not to do good?

RECHA.

Leave not again your Recha e'er alone!—
Is it not true that he may but have gone
On travel?

NATHAN.

Certainly!—it may be so.—
I see a Mussulman with prying gaze
Viewing my laden camels. Know you him?

DAJA.

Ha! 'tis your Dervish.

NATHAN.

Who?

DAJA.

Your Dervish, Nathan!
He who plays chess with you.

NATHAN.

Is it Al-Hafi?

DAJA.

Now the Sultan's Treasurer.

NATHAN.

How? Al-Hafi?
Dream you again?—'Tis he! in truth 'tis he!
He comes. Quick, go you in!—What shall I hear?

SCENE III.

NATHAN—AL-HAFI.

AL-HAFI.

Open your eyes as widely as you can!

NATHAN.

Is 't you? is 't you, indeed?—So gaily clad,
A Dervish! . . .

AL-HAFI.

Well! and why not? Of a Dervish
Can nought be made? nothing at all?

NATHAN.

Ah, well,
Enough!—I only thought that nought a Dervish—
I mean a proper Dervish—of himself
Would e'er desire to make.

AL-HAFI.

O, by the Prophet!
That I 'm no proper Dervish may be true.
But if indeed one must . . .

NATHAN.

Must! from a Dervish!
A Dervish must? And if no man needs must,
Must then a Dervish? What is 't that he must?

AL-HAFI.

Whate'er one rightly asks him, and what he
Acknowledges as good, that must a Dervish.

NATHAN.

O by our God! you speak that which is true.—
Let me embrace you, man!—You 're still my friend?

AL-HAFI.

But do you not first ask what I 've become?

NATHAN.

Nay, nay, in spite of what you have become!

AL-HAFI.

Might it not be a servant of the State,
Whose friendship were to you inopportune?

NATHAN.

If still in heart a Dervish, I'll that venture;
The servant of the State is but your dress.

AL-HAFI.

That would be honour'd too.—What think you? Guess
What at your Court am I?

NATHAN.

Dervish, nought else.
Yet in addition, probably—a cook!

AL-HAFI.

Well, yes! with you my business to unlearn!—
Cook! and not butler too?—But yet confess
That Saladin me better knows.—To him
I Treasurer have become.

NATHAN.

You? and to him?

AL-HAFI.

Mark me: the smaller Treasury I keep;
For of the greater Treasury his sire
Is keeper still—his household Treasury.

NATHAN.

His household's large.

AL-HAFI.

Ay, larger than you think;
For every beggar has a place in it.

NATHAN.

And yet of beggars he is such a foe—

AL-HAFI.

That he proposed to put an end to them
With food and clothes, though he himself should beggar.

NATHAN.

Bravo! that is exactly what I thought.

AL-HAFI.

That he, in spite of one, already is!
For with the sun-down every day his treasury
Greatly more empty still than empty is.
The tide, which rushes deep and full at morn,
When it is noon has long since ebb'd away—

NATHAN.

For 'tis by channels swallow'd up in part,
Which it is equally impossible
Either to fill or stop.

AL-HAFI.

You 've hit it, Nathan!

NATHAN.

That well I know.

AL-HAFI.

Truly 'tis bad enough
If amongst carrion princes vultures are;
But if they amongst vultures carrion be,
Then it is tenfold worse.

NATHAN.

O not so, Dervish!
Not so!

AL-HAFI.

For you to talk is easy!—come:
What give you if I cede my post to you?

NATHAN.

What income brings it in?

AL-HAFI.

To me? not much.
Yet it to you can excellent return
At interest yield, for if—as oft occurs—
There's in the Treasury an ebb, then ope
Your flood-gates up: your money then advance,
And take as interest whatsoe'er you please.

NATHAN.

E'en interest for the interest of the interest?

AL-HAFI.

Yes!

NATHAN.

Till capital pure interest has become.

AL-HAFI.

Does that allure you not? Then write at once
To our old friendship of divorce a bill!
For I in truth have reckon'd much on you.

NATHAN.

Indeed! How so? how so?

AL-HAFI.

That me you'd help
Mine office honourably to conduct;
That I'd with you find aye an open purse.—
You shake your head?

NATHAN.

Let us but understand
Each other rightly! There's a distinction here.—
You—why not you?—as Dervish, as Al-Hafi,

To all that I possess are ever welcome.—
But as the Sultan's Treasurer Al-Hafi,
Who . . . to whom . . .

AL-HAFI.

Rightly guess'd I not? That aye
You're good as prudent, prudent too as wise!
Patience! Soon the distinction which you make
'Twixt the Al-Hafis will have disappear'd.—
Behold this robe of honour, which to me
The Sultan gave; ere it has faded, ere
To rags reduced such rags as suit a Dervish,—
'Twill in Jerusalem hang on a nail;
And at the Ganges, light-clad, with bare feet,
I with my teachers will the hot sand tread.

NATHAN.

Like you enough!

AL-HAFI.

And play with them at chess.

NATHAN.

Your chief delight!

AL-HAFI.

Think only what it was
That me misled!—So that no longer I
Myself should beg?—that I with beggars might
Play the rich man?—Could I change in a trice
The richest beggar to a poor rich man?

NATHAN.

Well—no.

AL-HAFI.

Yet it was something more absurd!

Flatter'd I felt myself for the first time;
Flatter'd through Saladin's kind-hearted dream.—

NATHAN.

Which was?

AL-HAFI.

A beggar only rightly knows
What beggars feel; and he alone has learnt
To give to beggars in a proper way.
'Your predecessor,' said he, 'was for me
By far too cold, too rough—and when he gave,
He so unkindly gave; he first inquired
'Bout the recipient so impetuously;
And not content to know that there was want,
He also sought to know what caused that want,
That he with niggardness might weigh his gift
According to that cause. That would not Hafi!
In Hafi Saladin will not appear
So harshly charitable. He's not like
Obstructed channels, which give forth again
The waters, which they clear and calm received,
So bubbling, so impure. Al-Hafi thinks,
Al-Hafi feels as I.' The fowler's whistle
Sounded so sweetly, till the simpleton
Was in the net.—O what a fool was I!
Fool'd by a fool!

NATHAN.

Nay, softly, Dervish, softly!

AL-HAFI.

Well, what was it?—Was it not foolery
By hundred thousands to oppress mankind,

Plunder, impoverish, torture, strangle them,
And wish to individual men to seem
A philanthrope? Was it not foolery
To ape the Lord Almighty's charity,
Which spreads itself,—without selection spreads
O'er bad and good, o'er mead and wilderness,
In sunshine and in rain,—and not to have
Th' Almighty's ever-plenteous hand? How say you?
Was it not foolery . . .

NATHAN.

Hold, 'tis enough.

AL-HAFI.

Yet let me speak of my own foolery!—
What? was't not foolery yet to hunt out
The good side of such fooleries, so that,
On that good side's account, in them I might
Take part? Ha! was it not?

NATHAN.

See then, Al-Hafi,
That to your deserts soon again you go.
I fear that just 'mongst men you might forget
To be a man.

AL-HAFI.

You're right; that fear'd I too.
Farewell! [*Exit* AL-HAFI.

NATHAN.

Why in such haste? nay, stay awhile.
Will then the desert run away from you?—
Stay!—would that me he heard! Hey, here, Al-Hafi!
He's gone; and fain I would have question'd him
About our Templar. Probably he knows him.

SCENE IV.

DAJA, *rushing in hurriedly*—NATHAN.

DAJA.

Nathan! Nathan!

NATHAN.

Well? what's the matter now?

DAJA.

He has again been seen! he has been seen!

NATHAN.

Who, Daja? who?

DAJA.

He!—he!

NATHAN.

He? he? ah, when
Does *he* not let himself be seen? Yes, yes!
'Tis only he in truth that you call he.—
That should not be, e'en if he were an angel!

DAJA.

He wanders up and down beneath the palms,
And for himself from time to time plucks dates.

NATHAN.

And eats them?—as a Templar?

DAJA.

Why me tease?
Her eager eye already him espied
Under the palms so thickly there entwined,
And with fix'd gaze she follows after him.
You she entreats, conjures without delay

To go to him. O haste! she 'll sign to you
From out the window whether he goes up,
Or wanders farther down. O do make haste!

NATHAN.

Just as I am from off my camel's back
New lighted down? Nay, is that fitting?—Go,
Haste you to him, and mention my return.
Depend on 't, this brave man into my house,
When I was absent, did not choose to come;
But he 'll come not unwillingly when he
By Recha's father has invited been.
Go, say that heartily I him request . . .

DAJA.

'Tis all in vain! To you he will not come,—
For he, in short, comes not to any Jew.

NATHAN.

Go then, go you at least him to detain,
Or with your eyes at least to follow him.
Go you, immediately I'll after you.

(NATHAN *hurries into the house,* DAJA *goes out.*)

SCENE V.

A place with palms, under which the TEMPLAR *is walking up and down. A* LAY-BROTHER *follows him aside at some distance, always as if he were anxious to address him.*

TEMPLAR.

That man does not for pastime follow me!—

See how he eyes a-squint my hands! Good Brother—
I may, too, call you Father, may I not?

LAY-BROTHER.

Brother—Lay-Brother only, at your service.

TEMPLAR.

Well, good Brother, had I myself but something!
By heavens! by heavens! I nothing have—

LAY-BROTHER.

And yet
Right hearty thanks! May God a thousand fold
Give you what you would willingly bestow;
For 'tis the will and not the gift that makes
The giver.—But still after you for alms
I was not sent.

TEMPLAR.

Yet after me you're sent?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, from the convent.

TEMPLAR.

Where I even now
A meagre pilgrim's meal had hoped to find?

LAY-BROTHER.

The tables were already occupied:
Yet come, sir, back with me.

TEMPLAR.

And wherefore so?
For a long time I have not eaten meat.
But what of that? for the dates now are ripe.

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet, sir, you must be cautious with that fruit.

It is not good to eat too much of it;
The spleen it stops,—makes melancholic blood.

TEMPLAR.

But what if melancholy now I long'd
To feel?—But yet not for this warning's sake
Were you sent after me?

LAY-BROTHER.

O no, sir, no!—
I was to seek you out, that I might sound you.

TEMPLAR.

And say you so yourself to me?

LAY-BROTHER.

Why not?

TEMPLAR.

(*Aside.* A crafty brother this!) More of your like
Contains your convent?

LAY-BROTHER.

I know not. I must,
Dear sir, obey.

TEMPLAR.

Without refining much,
Do you obey?

LAY-BROTHER.

Were it obedience else?

TEMPLAR.

(*Aside.* O may simplicity aye keep by right!)
And dare you then also confide to me
Who 'tis that would more thoroughly know me?—
That 'tis not you yourself, that will I swear.

LAY-BROTHER.

Would it become me? would it profit me?

TEMPLAR.

Whom then does it become, whom does it profit,
That he is so inquisitive?—whom, then?

LAY-BROTHER.

That 'tis the Patriarch I must suppose—
For he it was who sent me after you.

TEMPLAR.

The Patriarch? Nay, does he not better know
On the white cloak the red cross?

LAY-BROTHER.

How know I?

TEMPLAR.

Well, Brother: I 'm a Templar, and a captive;—
At Tebnin taken captive—let me add—
The fort which in the last hour of the truce
We anxious were to storm, in order that
Sidon we might attack;—this, too, I add:
With twenty others I was captive made,
And I alone by Saladin was pardon'd:
And so the Patriarch knows what he needs know—
More than he needs.

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet scarcely more than he
Already knows.—He also fain would know
Why 'twas that you by Saladin were pardon'd,
And you alone.

TEMPLAR.

Do I know that myself?—

Already, with my neck laid bare, I knelt
Upon my mantle, and the stroke awaited;
When Saladin upon me keenly fix'd
His gaze, sprang nearer me, and made a sign.
They raise me up; from fetters I 'm set free;
I wish to thank him; see his eyes in tears:
He 's silent, so am I; he goes, I stay.—
How all this holds together, for himself
The Patriarch may unriddle.

LAY-BROTHER.

He concludes
That God for great things must have you preserved.

TEMPLAR.

Yea, for great things! A Jewish girl to save
From out the fire; to Sinai to conduct
The prying pilgrims, and things of that sort!

LAY-BROTHER.

The time will come!—Meanwhile this is no trifle.—
Perhaps the Patriarch has himself prepared
For you far weightier business.

TEMPLAR.

Think you so?
Has he already let you know of it?

LAY-BROTHER.

Ha, yes, in truth!—I was to sound you first,
That he might know if you 're the proper man.

TEMPLAR.

All right, then, sound away! (*Aside.* Yet will I see
How me he sounds!)—Well, then?

LAY-BROTHER.

The shortest way
Will be the Patriarch's wishes to unfold
Exactly.

TEMPLAR.

Well!

LAY-BROTHER.

He'd have through you convey'd
A letter.

TEMPLAR.

Through me? I'm no messenger.—
So that's the business that's more glorious far
Than from the fire to save a Jewish girl?

LAY-BROTHER.

It must so be! For says the Patriarch:
Unto all Christendom this little letter
Is of great consequence. The Patriarch says
This too: for having carried well this letter,
One day will God in heaven as a reward
Bestow a special crown;—and of that crown—
The Patriarch says — none worthier is than you.

TEMPLAR.

Than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

Because this special crown to merit—
The Patriarch says—there's scarcely any one
More able, sir, than you.

TEMPLAR.

Than I?

LAY-BROTHER.

For here
You're free; can here examine all around;
Well understand a city how to storm,
How to defend; can—says the Patriarch—
Best estimate the weakness and the strength
Of Saladin's newly erected walls,
The second inner line,—and to God's warriors
Most clearly them describe.—So says the Patriarch.

TEMPLAR.

Good Brother, would that now I could but know
The closer import of the letter!

LAY-BROTHER.

That—
That I scarce rightly know myself. I know
But this: that to King Philip 'tis address'd.—
The Patriarch . . . I have often wonder'd how
A saint, who else leads such a heavenly life,
Can at the same time so demean himself
As of the world's affairs himself to keep
So well inform'd. That must him greatly trouble.

TEMPLAR.

Well, then? the Patriarch?—

LAY-BROTHER.

Knows most thoroughly
And quite reliably how—where—how strong,
And from what quarter Saladin, in case
The war's resumed, will open his campaign.

TEMPLAR.

Does he know that?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, and he anxious is
To let King Philip know; that so he may
Judge haply if the danger be so great
As that with Saladin, cost what it will,
The truce he should renew which by your Order
So bravely was infringed.

TEMPLAR.

Ah! what a Patriarch!—
Just so! The dear good man would have in me
No common messenger; he'd have—a spy.—
Good Brother, tell your Patriarch, that so far
As you can fathom me, that's not my business;
That I must still regard myself a captive,
And that a Templar's only calling's this:
To wield the sword,—and not to play the spy.

LAY-BROTHER.

I thought so!—Yet, sir, you 'll not take it ill,—
The best has still to come.—The Patriarch next
Has ascertain'd what 'tis the fort is call'd,
And where on Lebanon it stands, wherein
Unheard of sums of gold lie hid, with which
The Sultan's prudent father pays the army,
And the equipments of the war supplies.
From time to time there Saladin repairs,
By roads secluded, with attendance small.—
You mark me?

TEMPLAR.

Never!

LAY-BROTHER.

What were easier
Than to seize Saladin, and his death-stroke
Inflict?—You shudder, sir?—Two Maronites—
God-fearing men—already have themselves
Offer'd to do the work, if but they're led
By a brave man.

TEMPLAR.

And me as that brave man
The Patriarch had selected?

LAY-BROTHER.

He believes
From Ptolemais that King Philip can
Best lend a helping hand to this exploit.

TEMPLAR.

And this he asks of me?—Have you not heard,
Or do you now first hear what obligation
To Saladin I'm under?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, I've heard.

TEMPLAR.

And yet?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes—thinks the Patriarch—that is well;
But yet God and the Order . . .

TEMPLAR.

Matter not!—
Impose on me no villany!

LAY-BROTHER.

O, no!

Only the Patriarch thinks that villany
'Fore men is not, too, villany 'fore God.

TEMPLAR.

To Saladin I owed my life; and yet
Robb'd him of his?

LAY-BROTHER.

O, fy!—yet Saladin—
The Patriarch thinks—still aye remain'd a foe
Of Christendom, and can acquire no right
To be your friend.

TEMPLAR.

A friend?—'gainst whom I 'll not
A knave, and an ungrateful knave, become.

LAY-BROTHER.

O, certainly!—In truth—the Patriarch thinks—
That we are quit of thanks 'fore God and man
If for ourselves the service was not done.
'Tis rumour'd—so the Patriarch says—that you
From Saladin on this account found favour,
Because he in your mien and character
A striking likeness of his brother found . . .

TEMPLAR.

And this the Patriarch also knows; and yet?—
Ah! can that certain be? Ah, Saladin!—
How if Dame Nature of thy brother's form
Had fashion'd but one trait in me, and nought
There was that answer'd to it in my soul?
To please a Patriarch then could I suppress
What answer'd it? Nature, thou liest not thus!
God in his works does not gainsay himself

In such a way as that! Go, Brother! go!
Raise not my choler thus!—Go, I say go!

LAY-BROTHER.

I go, and go more pleased than when I came.
Pardon me, sir! We brethren of the cloister
To our superiors owe obedience. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

The TEMPLAR *and* DAJA, *who from a distance has been for a long time watching the Templar, and now approaches him.*

DAJA.

Not in the best of moods has the Lay-Brother
Left him, methinks.—Yet must I risk my errand.

TEMPLAR.

Ah, excellent!—Is it a lying adage:
'Monk and woman, woman and monk, are both
Claws of the devil'? He throws me to-day
From one to t' other.

DAJA.

Ah, what do I see?—
You, noble knight?—O, thanks be unto God!
To God a thousand thanks!—Where, pray, have you
Been all this time conceal'd? You've not been sick?

TEMPLAR.

No.

DAJA.

In good health?

TEMPLAR.

Yes.

DAJA.

And yet we, in truth,
Have greatly troubled been on your account.

TEMPLAR.

Indeed?

DAJA.

You've surely travell'd?

TEMPLAR.

That's well guess'd.

DAJA.

And have come back to-day?

TEMPLAR.

No; yesterday.

DAJA.

To-day, too, Recha's father has arrived.
And now may Recha have good hopes?

TEMPLAR.

Of what?

DAJA.

Of what she oft has caused me to ask you.
Her father now invites you pressingly.
He comes from Babylon with twenty camels,
All heavy-laden, too, with whatsoe'er
In fragrant spices, precious stones, and stuffs,
Is vouch'd as the most costly; these he brings
From India, Persia, Syria, even China.

TEMPLAR.

I'll nothing buy.

DAJA.

His people as a prince
Him greatly honour. Yet, that they him call
Nathan 'the Wise,' and not still more 'the Rich'—
That oft has me surprised.

TEMPLAR.

Rich and wise haply
Are with his people the same thing.

DAJA.

And yet
They above all should have call'd him 'the Good;'
For, sir, you cannot think how good he is.
Soon as he heard what Recha owed to you,
What at that moment would he not have done
For you? what would he not to you have given?

TEMPLAR.

Indeed!

DAJA.

Make trial of him; come and see!

TEMPLAR.

What then? How soon a moment's past and gone!

DAJA.

Would I—if he were not so good—would I
Have let myself so long remain with him?
Think you, perhaps, that as a Christian I
My value feel not? It was not to me
While in my cradle sung, that I should follow
To Palestine my husband's steps, that there

I was a Jewish maiden to bring up.
In the Emperor Frederick's army my dear husband
An esquire was—

TEMPLAR.

He was a Switzer born,
To whom the honour and the grace were given
With his Imperial Majesty himself
In the same river to be drown'd.—How oft
Woman! have you already told me that!
Will you not cease, then, me to persecute?

DAJA.

To persecute! O gracious heavens!

TEMPLAR.

Yes, yes,
To persecute. You I will see no more!
No more will hear! nor be continually
Reminded of a deed of which I nothing
Ever have thought; which, if I think upon 't,
A riddle to myself it does become.
In truth, I would not rue it willingly,
But, look you, if such case occur again,
You'll be to blame if I don't act so rashly;
And if beforehand I inquiries make—
And I let burn whate'er may chance to burn.

DAJA.

O God forbid!

TEMPLAR.

This favour from to-day
At least be pleased to do me, and know me
No longer. This I do entreat of you.

Relieve me from the father. Jew is Jew;
I'm a blunt Suabian. From my heart for long
Is the girl's image gone, if e'er 'twas there.

DAJA.

Yet yours abides with her.

TEMPLAR.

Well, what of that?

DAJA.

Who knows? Men are not always what they seem.

TEMPLAR.

Yet rarely aught that's better.

(*Is going.*)

DAJA.

Stay, sir! stay!
Why in such haste?

TEMPLAR.

Woman! make me not hate
Those palms, 'mongst which I erst have loved to roam.

[*Exit.*

DAJA.

Begone, you German bear! begone!—and yet
I must not lose the track of the wild beast.

(*She follows him at a distance.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A room in the Sultan's Palace.

SALADIN *and* SITTAH *are playing at chess.*

SITTAH.

Where, brother, stray thy thoughts? and how to-day
Play'st thou?

SALADIN.

Not well? I thought I had play'd well—

SITTAH.

For me; and yet not quite.—Take back that move.

SALADIN.

Why?

SITTAH.

For your knight's uncover'd.

SALADIN.

True. Well, there.

SITTAH.

And so I forward move into the gap.

SALADIN.

That's true again.—Then check!

SITTAH.

What does that boot?
I cover it; and thou art as thou wert.

SALADIN.

I can't from this dilemma get scot-free,
That see I. So be it. Then take my knight.

SITTAH.

No, I'll not take the knight, but I'll move past.

SALADIN.

By that thou giv'st me nothing. In that place
There lieth more for thee than in the knight.

SITTAH.

That may be so.

SALADIN.

But make thy reckoning not
Without thy host. For look you! I will bet
Thou hadst not that expected?

SITTAH.

No, in truth.
For how could I expect that of thy queen
Thou shouldst be tired?

SALADIN.

Tired of my queen?

SITTAH.

I see
That I'll to-day my thousand dinars win,
Not a jot more.

SALADIN.

How so?

SITTAH.

That still you ask!—
Because on purpose, and with all your might,
You will to lose.—Yet therein my account
I find not. For, besides that such a game
Is not the most diverting, won I not
Ever the most from thee just when I lost?
When didst thou not to me return the stake
Doubled, for the lost game to comfort me?

SALADIN.

Then, sister mine, lo, thou wouldst purposely
Have lost, if thou hadst lost at all?

SITTAH.

At least
It may be that thy generosity,
My brother dear, may well be blamed for this,
That I've not better learnt to play the game.

SALADIN.

We wander from our game. Come, make an end!

SITTAH.

So stands it? Well, then: check! and double check!

SALADIN.

Well, truly, I this blunder had not seen,
That at the same time I should lose my queen.

SITTAH.

Could you have help'd it? Let me see.

SALADIN.

No, no!

Do thou just take my queen. I with that piece
Was never fortunate.

SITTAH.

With but that piece?

SALADIN.

Away with it!—That does no harm to me.
For thus all is secure again.

SITTAH.

How one
With queens must courteously deal, too well
My brother has me taught. (*She leaves it standing.*)

SALADIN.

Take it, or leave it!
None more have I.

SITTAH.

Why should I take it?—check!—
Check!—check!

SALADIN.

Go on.

SITTAH.

Check!—check!—and check!

SALADIN.

And mate!

SITTAH.

Not quite; thou still may'st interpose thy knight;
Or play it as thou wilt—'tis all the same!

SALADIN.

Quite right!—You 've won, and so Al-Hafi pays.
Let him be call'd—at once!—Not so far wrong,
Sittah, thou wert. My mind was wandering,

It was not in the game. And besides this:
Who gives us those smooth pieces constantly?
These us of nought remind, and nought denote.
Have I, then, with the Iman play'd? What say I?
Losers will have pretexts. Sittah, 'tis not
The ill-shaped pieces which have made me lose:
It was thy skill, thy quiet and quick eye . . .

SITTAH.

Thus, too, thou wilt but blunt the sting of loss;
Enough to say thou wert preoccupied,
More so than I.

SALADIN.

Than thou? And what had thee
Preoccupied?

SITTAH.

Not thy preoccupation!
When shall we play again so frequently?

SALADIN.

Therefore we 'll play all the more eagerly!
Mean'st thou because our war begins again?
Let it begin!—Foemen come on!—The first
To draw it on I have not been, for I
Would fain anew have lengthen'd out the truce;
And for my Sittah fain would I have won
A husband—and a worthy husband, too.
That must be Richard's brother; yes, his brother.

SITTAH.

If thou thy Richard canst but only praise!

SALADIN.

If to our brother Melek's share had fall'n

As consort Richard's sister, what a house
These unions would have made! Ha! 'twould have been
Best of the first best houses in the world!—
Thou see'st I am not slow to praise myself.
That I am worthy of my friends I think.—
O if these marriages had taken place,
They would have given us men! in truth they would!

SITTAH.

At that fine dream laugh'd I not all along?
Thou know'st the Christians not—thou wilt not know them.
Their pride is to be Christians, and not men.
For even that,—which, from their founder learnt,
Seasons their superstition with what's human,—
That not because 'tis human do they love,
But because Christ has taught it—and has done it.
'Tis well for them he was so good a man!—
'Tis well for them that they on trust and faith
Can take his virtue!—Yet what virtue?—Not
His virtue, but his name must be wide spread
Abroad throughout the world, and must the names
Of all good men degrade and swallow up.
'Tis with a name, and only with a name,
That they've to do.

SALADIN.

Thou mean'st: why should they else
Wish thee and Melek to be Christians call'd,
Ere you as Christian married folk might love?

SITTAH.

Yes, truly! as if 'twere from Christians only,

As Christians, that one could that love expect
With which by the Creator man and wife
Have been endow'd.

SALADIN.

The Christians believe
Such paltry things, that we might e'en expect
That this too they 'd believe!—And yet thou 'rt wrong—
The Templars, not the Christians, are to blame;
As Templars, not as Christians, they 're to blame.
Through them alone my project came to nought.
They utterly refused to give up Acca,
Which to our brother Melek, Richard's sister
Was to have brought as dower. They play the monk,
The silly monk, in order that a risk
Their Order's interests may not run. And if
They in a hurry haply could a chance
Of us successfully attacking get,
They scarce the expiration of the truce
Could wait for.—Go ye on so merrily!—
My masters, go ye on!—I 'm of good heart!—
Would that all else were as it ought to be!

SITTAH.

Well, then? What else was wrong with thee? What else
Could so have ruffled thee?

SALADIN.

That which for long
Has ruffled me.—I 've with my father been
At Lebanon. Under a load of cares
He is still sunk . . .

SITTAH.

Alas!

SALADIN.

He cannot stem them;
He's from all quarters cramp'd; now here, now there,
There's failure—

SITTAH.

What then cramps? What fails?

SALADIN.

What else
But that which I can scarcely deign to name—
Which, if I have it, so superfluous seems,
And so essential if I have it not.
But where's Al-Hafi? Has he not been summon'd?
That tiresome, cursèd money.—Ah, Al-Hafi,
'Tis well that you are come.

SCENE II.

AL-HAFI—SALADIN—SITTAH.

AL-HAFI.

Sire, I suppose
The monies out of Egypt have arrived,
If only they be in good quantity?

SALADIN.

Have you had news of that?

AL-HAFI.

I? No, not I.
I thought that I should have received it here.

SALADIN.

A thousand dinars you must pay to Sittah! (*walking up and down rapt in thought*).

AL-HAFI.

Must pay? 'stead of receive? Fine work is this!
That is for something which is less than nothing.—
To Sittah? Sittah once again? And lost—
Lost again at chess?—There still stands the game!

SITTAH.

You my success don't grudge, I hope?

AL-HAFI (*scrutinizing the game*).

Grudge what?
If . . . You know well . . .

SITTAH (*making signs to him*).

Hush, hush, Al-Hafi! hush!

AL-HAFI (*still directing attention to the game*).

Deserve it first, then I'll not grudge it you!

SITTAH.

Hush, hush, Al-Hafi!

AL-HAFI.

The white men were yours?
You offer check?

SITTAH.

'Tis well he has heard nothing.

AL-HAFI.

Now 'tis his move?

SITTAH (*approaching him*).

Say I can have my money.

AL-HAFI (*still intent on the game*).

You 'll have your money, as you 've always had it.

SITTAH.

How? are you mad?

AL-HAFI.

The game's not over yet.
You have not lost it, Saladin.

SALADIN (*scarce listening*).

Yes! yes!
Pay! pay!

AL-HAFI.

Pay! pay!—Your queen is standing there.

SALADIN.

She's of no use; she's in the game no longer.

SITTAH.

Make haste, and tell me I can have my money.

AL-HAFI (*still engross'd with the game*).

Of course, just as it always is.—But yet—
E'en if your queen be of no use, you're not
Therefore as yet check-mated.

SALADIN (*goes forward and throws down the board*).

'Tis check-mate.
I'll have it so!

AL-HAFI.

So be it!—Game like gain!
As won, so paid.

SALADIN.

What says he, Sittah? What?

SITTAH (*from time to time making signs to Al-Hafi*).

You know him well. He likes to growl; he likes
To be entreated; he is somewhat envious.—

SALADIN.

Yet not of thee? Not of my sister?—Hafi!
What hear I? Envious? You?

AL-HAFI.

It may be so!
It may be so!—Would that I had a brain
Like hers! would that I were as good as she!

SITTAH.

He notwithstanding has aye duly paid,
And will so pay to-day. Leave him alone!—
(*To Al-Hafi.*)
Go then, at once! I 'll have the money fetch'd.

AL-HAFI.

No, in this mummery I 'll no longer share.
Sooner or later he must hear of it.

SALADIN.

Who is it that must hear? What must he hear?

SITTAH (*to Al-Hafi*).

Is this your promise? Keep you so your word?

AL-HAFI.

How could I think that it would go so far?

SALADIN.

Well? Nought you tell me?

SITTAH (*to Al-Hafi*).

Be discreet, I beg.

SALADIN.

That 's strange indeed! What with solemnity
And warmth could Sittah wish to deprecate
From one who is a stranger, and a Dervish,

More than from me—from me who am her brother?
Al-Hafi, I command you, speak.—Speak, Dervish!

SITTAH.

Let not a trifle give thee more concern,
My brother dear, than it in truth deserves.
Thou knowest that at various times at chess
I these same sums have won from thee; and now,
Because now of the money I've no need,
And in Al-Hafi's chest 'tis not too plenty,
Therefore these monies there remain intact.
But don't concern thyself, my brother! I
Will gift them nor to thee, nor to Al-Hafi,
Nor to the Treasury.

AL-HAFI.

If it were but that!

SITTAH.

And more like that!—What you once set aside
For me now in the Treasury remains
Untouch'd; there it has lain for several months!

AL-HAFI.

That's not yet all.

SALADIN.

Not yet?—Will you say on?

AL-HAFI.

Since the Egyptian money we've been waiting

SITTAH.

Why list to him?

AL-HAFI.

Not only has she nought
Received . . .

SALADIN.

Kind girl! She also has advanced
Money for me. Is it not so?

AL-HAFI.

She has
Supported your whole Court; and quite alone
She your expenditure has borne.

SALADIN (*embracing her*).

Ha! that—
That is my sister!

SITTAH.

Who but thou, my brother,
Had me so wealthy made, as that for thee
I could do this?

AL-HAFI.

Again he'll make her poor,
Poor as a beggar, as he is himself.

SALADIN.

I poor?—her brother poor? When have I more,
When have I less possess'd?—A coat, a sword,
A horse—also a God! what need I more?
When can these fail me? Yet you could I chide,
Al-Hafi!

SITTAH.

O my brother, chide him not.
Could I my father's cares but lighten so!

SALADIN.

Ah! now at once again my joyousness
Thou castest down! To me, as regards me,
Nothing is wanting, nothing can be so.

But he has wants; and all of us in him.—
O say, what should I do? From Egypt haply
There for a long time yet will nothing come.
What that depends upon, God knows. All there
Is quiet still.—I 'm ready to cut down—
Curtail expense—and save; with anything
I 'm fain to be content, if only me
It touch; if only I, and no one else
Thereby shall suffer.—Yet what can that do?
A horse, a coat, a sword—these I must have,
And for my God, him I cannot beat down.
Already with a little he 's content—
With but my heart.—I had much reckon'd, Hafi,
Upon a surplus in your Treasury.

AL-HAFI.

Surplus?—Say then yourself if you would not
Have me impaled, strangled at least, if I
Had been detected by you with a surplus.
Yea, on a deficit I might have ventured.

SALADIN.

What's to be done? Could you not first of all
Have borrow'd from some other than from Sittah?

SITTAH.

Would I have had, my brother, from me wrung
That privilege? and wrung from me by him?
I still insist on it; for my resources
Not yet entirely are dried up.

SALADIN.

Not yet,
And only not entirely? That was wanting.

Go, quickly, Hafi, preparation make!
Take you from whom you can, and how you can;
Go, borrow, promise.—Only borrow not
From those whom I've made rich. From them to borrow
Might well be call'd demanding back again.
To the most avaricious go; for they
Will readiest be to lend. For they know well
That money in my hands yields interest good.

AL-HAFI.

None such I know.

SITTAH.

It just occurs to me
That I've heard, Hafi, of your friend's return.

AL-HAFI (*startled*).

A friend? my friend? who's that?

SITTAH.

Your much-prized Jew.

AL-HAFI.

Prized Jew? much prized by me?

SITTAH.

On whom his God—
(The expression I remember which you once
Did use concerning him)—on whom his God,
Of all the good things which this world can give,
Bestow'd in measure full the least and greatest.

AL-HAFI.

Did I say so?—What could I mean by that?

SITTAH.

Wealth of good things the least; wisdom the greatest.

AL-HAFI.

How?—of a Jew could I have spoken thus?

SITTAH.

Mean you, you have not this of Nathan said?

AL-HAFI.

Ha! said of him? of Nathan? He did not
Occur to me.—Has he, in truth, at length
Come home again? Ah, then, he may not be
In circumstances low:—you are quite right;
Once by the people he was call'd 'The Wise!'
Also 'The Rich.'

SITTAH.

They more than ever now
Call him 'The Rich'; for the whole city's talk
Is of what costly things, what treasures, he
Has brought with him.

AL-HAFI.

If he's 'The Rich' again,
Then he will also be again 'The Wise.'

SITTAH.

What do you think about approaching him?

AL-HAFI.

And what expect from him? Sure, not to borrow?
You know him well! He lend! 'Tis just his wisdom
That he to no man lends.

SITTAH.

You formerly
Gave me of him another picture quite.

AL-HAFI.

In case of need he 'll lend you goods. But money,

Money? No, by no means.—As for the rest,
He is a Jew indeed—as among Jews
There are not many such. He has good sense,
Knows what is proper;—and plays well at chess.
Yet 'fore all other Jews he is distinguish'd,
For what is bad no less than what is good.—
Reckon thou not on him.—He to the poor
Gives of his substance, gives perhaps as well
As Saladin; if not so much, yet quite
As cheerfully; yet perfectly without
Respect of persons. For to him alike
Are Christian, Jew, Parsee, and Mussulman.

SITTAH.

And such a man . . .

SALADIN.

How comes it, then, that
Of this man ne'er have heard?

SITTAH.

To Saladin
Should he not lend? not to that Saladin
Who needs it but for others, not himself?

AL-HAFI.

Lo there again the Jew, the common Jew!—
Trust what I say!—In giving, he of you
So jealous is, so envious!—Each reward
Of God, which in this world 's bestow'd, he 'd fain
Draw to himself alone. Therefore to none
He lends, just that he aye may have to give.
While by the Law on him has been enjoin'd
The grace of charity, but complaisance

Has not been so enjoin'd, *that* charity
Makes him as an associate most unpleasant.
For a long time, indeed, not on good terms
I've been with him; and yet you must not think
That therefore I injustice show to him.
He's good in all things, only not in giving;
Only in that in truth he is not good.
I'll go at once, and knock at other doors . . .
I've just bethought me of a Moor, who's rich
And avaricious.—So I'll go, I'll go. [*Exit.*

SITTAH.

Al-Hafi, why such haste?

SALADIN.

O, let him go.

SCENE III.

SITTAH—SALADIN.

SITTAH.

He hastes, as if from me he'd fain escape!
What does that mean? Is it that he in Nathan
Himself's deceived—or would he us deceive?

SALADIN.

How? Ask'st thou that of me? Scarcely I know
Of whom it was you spoke; and of your Jew
Nathan for the first time I hear to-day.

SITTAH.

Is't possible that from thy ken was hid

A man of whom 'tis said that he the tombs
Of David and of Solomon has search'd,
And that he knows a potent secret word
Through which he can break ope their seals; from them
That he from time to time brings forth to light
Riches immense, which show'd no lesser source?

SALADIN.

If from these tombs this man his riches has,
Then surely they were not the tombs of David
And of Solomon. Fools lay buried there!

SITTAH.

Or villains!—Of his wealth far more abundant,
And far more inexhaustible's the source,
Than are such tombs as these with Mammon fill'd.

SALADIN.

For, as I 've heard, he trades.

SITTAH.

His sumpter-mules
Move through all streets, and traverse every desert;
His ships lie in all havens. That to me
Hafi himself once told, and with delight
Added how great, how noble is the use
Which his friend makes of what so prudently
And actively to gain, he nought too small
Regards; added: how free from prejudice
His mind—his heart how ope to every virtue,
And how with every beauty in accord.

SALADIN.

And yet just now he so uncertainly,
And with such coldness spoke of him.

SITTAH.

With coldness!
No; but embarrass'd, as if dangerous
He held it him to praise, and yet as if
He would not blame him undeservedly.—
Or is it really so, that of his people
Even the best cannot escape reproach?
Is it the case that for his friend, Al-Hafi
Should cause have had in this respect to blush?
But be that as it may regarding him—
Be the Jew more or less a Jew—for us,
If only he be rich, that is enough.

SALADIN.

Yet, sister, thou wouldst not with violence
Take from him what is his?

SITTAH.

Ah, well,
What call you violence? With fire and sword?
No, no! what violence need you with the weak
But their own weakness?—Come thou now with me
To my harem, a songstress there to hear
Whom yesterday I bought. Meanwhile perchance
May ripen a design, which I upon
This Nathan have.—Then come, my brother, come!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Before the house of NATHAN, *where it adjoins the palms.* RECHA *and* NATHAN *come out of the house. To them soon afterwards* DAJA *enters.*

RECHA.

My father, you have tarried very long ;
He'll scarcely now be met with.

NATHAN.

Ah ! well, well !
If we no more may meet him 'neath the palms,
Yet elsewhere it may be.—Only be calm.—
Is not that Daja coming towards us ?

RECHA.

Ah, she most certainly must him have lost !

NATHAN.

O no, not so.

RECHA.

She would else quicker come.

NATHAN.

She mayn't have seen us yet . . .

RECHA.

She sees us now.

NATHAN.

Look ! she her speed redoubles. Be but calm.

RECHA.

Would you a daughter have who could be calm
And unconcern'd 'bout him whose kindness saved

Her life? Her life—only to her so dear,
Because she first of all owes it to you.

NATHAN.

I would not have thee other than thou art,
E'en though I knew thy heart by something else
Besides the feelings for myself was stirr'd.

RECHA.

What, father?

NATHAN.

Ask'st thou me? Ask'st thou thus shyly?
That which within thy heart is passing—that
Is innocence and nature. Let it not
Give thee concern; for to me none it gives.
Only this promise me: that when thy heart
Declares itself more clearly, thou 'lt from me
None of thy wishes hide.

RECHA.

Already I
Tremble to think that it is possible
That I would choose to veil my heart from thee.

NATHAN.

Of this no more! That's ended once for all.—
Ha! here is Daja.—Well?

DAJA.

The wanderer's still
Beneath the palms, and he immediately
Will to that wall come nigh.—See, there he comes!

RECHA.

Ah! and seems undecided where to go—
Farther? or down? or to the right? or left?

DAJA.

No; certainly he'll round the convent go
A few times more, and then must pass this way.
What do you think?

RECHA.

Right!—Spoke you then to him?
How find you him to-day?

DAJA.

Ever the same.

NATHAN.

Let him not be aware that you are here.
Retire—or rather go into the house.

RECHA.

But one more look!—that hedge steals him from me!

DAJA.

Come! come! your father's right. Should he see you,
There is a risk that he may turn away.

RECHA.

Ah me! that hedge!

NATHAN.

And if he suddenly
Should from behind it come, it cannot fail
But he must see you. Therefore go at once!

DAJA.

He comes! I know a window whence we can
Observe them.

RECHA.

Is it so?

Scene V.

NATHAN, *and soon afterwards the* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

I'm nigh afraid
Of this strange man. I almost startled am
With his rough virtue; and yet should one man
Be able thus to make another man
Embarrass'd so? He comes.—By heavens! a youth
Like to a full-grown man! Right well I like
His good, defiant look! his gait so bold!
The shell alone may bitter be; the kernel
Is certainly not so. Where have I seen
His like?—Your pardon, noble Frank . . .

TEMPLAR.

For what?

NATHAN.

Allow me . . .

TEMPLAR.

What, Jew? What?

NATHAN.

To be so bold
As to address you.

TEMPLAR.

Can I that prevent?
Only be brief!

NATHAN.

Your pardon; hasten not

So proudly, so contemptuously past
A man whom you for ever have obliged.

TEMPLAR.

How?—Ha! I almost guess. Is 't not that you . . .

NATHAN.

My name is Nathan; father of the girl
Who by your magnanimity was saved
Out of the fire. I come . . .

TEMPLAR.

If to thank me,
Then spare your pains! Already I have been
Compell'd to bear too many thanks for what
Was but a trifle.—You 're not in my debt.
Was I aware that that girl was your daughter?
It is the Templars' duty any one
Whose need they may have seen to rush to help.
My life besides was burdensome to me
Just at that moment, and most willingly
I seized the opportunity to risk
It for another's life: yes, for another's—
E'en if 'twere but the life of a Jewess.

NATHAN.

Great! great and horrible! But yet that turn
Might well have been expected.—Modest greatness
Makes its escape behind the horrible,
In order admiration to avoid.
But if it so disdain the offering
Of admiration, then what offering
Disdains it less? Knight, if you were not here
A stranger and a captive, I would not

So boldly question you. Speak, and command me:
How can I serve you?

TEMPLAR.

You? In nothing, sir.

NATHAN.

I'm a rich man.

TEMPLAR.

To me the richer Jew
Was ne'er the better Jew.

NATHAN.

May you not use,
Therefore, what 'spite of that he better has?
May you not use his wealth?

TEMPLAR.

O, well then, that
For my cloak's sake I will not quite reject.
Soon as it is completely worn, and neither stitch
Nor shred will hold together, then I'll come
And borrow from you a new cloak or money.—
Nay, look not all at once so black! For still
You're safe; it's not yet gone so far with it.
You see it's still in tolerable case,
Only one lappet has an ugly spot;
It has been singed; and that it got when I
Did bear your daughter through the fire.

NATHAN (*laying hold of the lappet and looking at it*).

.. And yet
'Tis strange that such an ugly spot, that such
A brand, should for the man give evidence
Better than his own mouth.—I could it kiss—

That spot!—Ah, pardon me!—Against my will
It happen'd.

TEMPLAR.

What?

NATHAN.

A tear upon it fell.

TEMPLAR.

It matters not! It has a drop the more.—
Aside. (But yet this Jew begins to puzzle me.)

NATHAN.

Would you then be so good as send your cloak
Unto my daughter?

TEMPLAR.

What with it to do?

NATHAN.

To press her lips upon that spot; for she
Desires in vain your knees themselves to clasp.

TEMPLAR.

But, Jew—your name is Nathan?—But though, Nathan,
Your words be very good—and very pointed—
I marvel—certainly—I would have come . . .

NATHAN.

Nay, represent or e'en disguise yourself
As you may please, for here I find you out.
You were too good, too just, to be more courteous.—
The girl all feeling; all officiousness
The female messenger; her father gone
To a far distance;—you for her good name
Were careful, and you from temptation fled;

Fled that you might not gain a victory.
For that I give you thanks.—

TEMPLAR.

I must confess,
You know how Templars ought to think.

NATHAN.

But Templars?
Ought they alone? And only so because
'Tis by their Order's regulations ruled?
I know how good men think; I also know
That all lands bear good men.

TEMPLAR.

And yet I hope
'Tis with some difference?

NATHAN.

Mayhap a difference
In colour, dress, and form?

TEMPLAR.

And also *here*
Sometimes are more, and sometimes less than *there.*

NATHAN.

And yet not very far that difference goes.
The great man in all places needs much room;
And several boughs in trees too closely planted
Are apt to clash. Whereas the average men,
Like us—these everywhere in crowds are found;
Only the one must not the other scar;
Only the gnarl must with the trunk agree;
Only the summit-top must not presume
That it alone is not sprung from the ground.

TEMPLAR.

It is well said!—Yet know you not the people
That were the first this finding fault with men
To exercise? And know you not what people
First called themselves the chosen race of God?
How, if I did not view with hate that people,
Yet on their pride's account could I forbear
From them despising? On their pride's account—
Which to the Christian and the Mussulman
They have bequeath'd—that their God is the true!—
You are surprised that so speak I, who am
A Christian and a Templar? When and where
But here and now has in its darkest form
This pious madness shown itself of having
The better God, and upon all the world
Forcing that better God as e'en the best?
And from whom here and from whom now fall not
The scales from off his eyes . . . Yet be he blind
Who will!—Forget what I have said, and leave me!

(*Is going.*)

NATHAN.

Ah! you know not how much more strongly now
I 'll press myself on you.—Come, then, we must—
We must be friends!—Despise, e'en as you please,
My people.—Neither of us chose our people.
Are we perchance our people? What are they?
Are Jews and Christians Jews and Christians first—
Then men? Ah! if in you I may have found
One more whom it suffices to be call'd
A man!

TEMPLAR.

Yes, that you have, by heavens! you have!—
Your hand!—I am ashamed that for one moment
You I've mistaken.

NATHAN.

And I'm proud of that.
Only what's common seldom one mistakes.

TEMPLAR.

And what's uncommon seldom one forgets.
Nathan! ah yes, we must—we must be friends.

NATHAN.

We're so already.—How it will rejoice
My Recha!—What a brilliant prospect looms
Upon my gaze!—But you must know her first!

TEMPLAR.

Now with desire I burn to do so, Nathan!—
Who is that there now rushing from your house?
Is't not her Daja?

NATHAN.

Yes. So anxiously?

TEMPLAR.

Has aught to Recha happen'd?

SCENE VI.

NATHAN—*The* TEMPLAR—DAJA, *hurrying in.*

DAJA.

Nathan! Nathan!

NATHAN.

What now?

DAJA.

Your pardon, noble knight, that I
Must interrupt you.

NATHAN.

Well, what is 't?

TEMPLAR.

What is 't?

DAJA.

A message from the Sultan. He desires
To speak with you. My God the Sultan!

NATHAN.

Me?

The Sultan Saladin! He 'll anxious be
To see what novelties I 've brought with me.
Tell him there 's little, almost nought unpack'd.

DAJA.

No, no; he 'd nothing see, he 'd speak with you—
With you in person—soon, soon as you can.

NATHAN.

I 'll come.—Only go you away again!

DAJA.

Be not offended, knight severe.—O God,
We 're greatly troubled as to what he wants.

NATHAN.

That will soon show itself. Go, only go.

[*Exit* DAJA.

SCENE VII.

NATHAN—*The* TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

Then you don't know him yet?—I mean in person.

NATHAN.

The Sultan Saladin? O no, not yet.
Him I have neither shunn'd, nor sought to know.
Common report spoke much too well of him
For me not rather it to trust as true,
Than to look into it myself.—Yet now—
E'en if the case were otherwise with him—
Through sparing of your life he has . . . .

TEMPLAR.

O yes!
That certainly he did. The life I live
Was given by him.

NATHAN.

rough that to me he gave
A double, triple life. Between us thus
Has all been changed; around me he has thrown
A cord that to his service evermore
Me binds. Scarce can I wait what he to me
Will first command. For all I am prepared;
And ready to confess that for your sake
I 'm so.

TEMPLAR.

To thank him for myself, as yet

I 've been unable, oft as in his way
I have been thrown. The impression, which on him
I made, so quickly came,—and disappear'd
Again as quickly. Who knows if at all
Me he remembers? Yet, once more at least
He must remember me, in order that
My fate he may decide. 'Tis not enough
That I exist by his command, that I
Live at his will; I must now learn from him
According to whose will I have to live.

NATHAN.

Not otherwise; the more on that account
Therefore will I not tarry.—It may be
That in our interview perhaps may pass
Some word that will occasion give to me
To point to you.—Your pardon—I must haste.—
But when—when shall we see you at our house?

TEMPLAR.

Soon as I may.

NATHAN.

Soon as you will.

TEMPLAR.

This day.

NATHAN.

And I must ask your name?

TEMPLAR.

My name was—is
Curd von Stauffen.—Curd!

NATHAN.

Von Stauffen?—Stauffen?

TEMPLAR.

Why does that strike you so?

NATHAN.

Said you Von Stauffen?
Several already of that race are . . .

TEMPLAR.

Yes,
Were here—here rot, too, several of that race.
Even my uncle—I should say my father.—
But why so keenly fix still more and more
Your gaze on me?

NATHAN.

O, nothing! How can I
Grow tired of looking on you?

TEMPLAR.

Then I 'll be
The first to leave. The searcher's gaze not seldom
Finds more than it desires to find; I fear it.
By degrees let time, not curiosity,
Make us to one another better known. [*Exit.*

NATHAN (*who looks after him in astonishment*).

'The searcher finds not seldom more than he
Desires to find.'—Is't not as if my soul
He reads?—In truth that may be my case too!—
Not only Wolf's form—gait—but his voice too;
And so completely so Wolf toss'd his head;
So in his arm Wolf held his sword; so Wolf
Stroked with his hand his eyebrows, as it were
To hide his fiery glance.—Such images
Deeply impress'd, how can they sleep in us

Until a word—a tone, awakes them up!—
Von Stauffen! — Right, all right; Filneck and Stauffen.—
Soon that I'll more exactly know; yea, soon.
But first to Saladin.—But how is this?
Lurks not there Daja?—Well, come nearer, Daja.

SCENE VIII.

DAJA—NATHAN.

NATHAN.

Well, what's the matter now? Both of your hearts
Are with anxiety oppress'd to hear
Something far other than what Saladin
Intends.

DAJA.

Can you blame her? You'd just begun
With him to speak more confidentially,
When, by the message of the Sultan scared,
We left the window.

NATHAN.

Well, then, say to her
That every moment she may him expect.

DAJA.

Indeed? Indeed?

NATHAN.

I can on you rely?
Be on your guard, Daja, I beg of you;

You shall not rue it. E'en your conscience shall
Find its account thereby. Only in nought
Disturb my plans. Only relate and question
Discreetly, with reserve . . .

DAJA.

Ah, wherefore think
Of thus reminding me at all? I go;
And go you too. But see! there comes, methinks,
From Saladin a second messenger—
Hafi, your Dervish. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

AL-HAFI—NATHAN.

AL-HAFI.

Ha! to you just now
I was about to come.

NATHAN.

Is't in such haste?
What wants he then from me?

AL-HAFI.

Who?

NATHAN.

Saladin!—
I come, I come.

AL-HAFI.

To whom? To Saladin?

NATHAN.

Sends he not you?

AL-HAFI.

Me? No. Has he then sent?

NATHAN.

Yes, he has truly.

AL-HAFI.

Then it is correct.

NATHAN.

What? what 's correct?

AL-HAFI.

That . . . But I 'm not to blame;
God knows I 'm not to blame.—What have I not
Said—lied of you, that this I might avert!

NATHAN.

Well, what avert? What is correct?

AL-HAFI.

That now
You have become the Sultan's treasurer.
I pity you. Yet see it I will not.
I go—this very hour I go. You 've heard
Already whither, and you know the road.—
If you have aught to order on the way,
Tell it, I 'm at your service. Yet, in truth,
It must not be more than a man can bear
Who 's naked. I am going, so speak soon.

NATHAN.

Do then bethink you, Hafi, that as yet
Nothing I know. Why do you then prate
there?

AL-HAFI.

Yet you will take your bags along with you?

NATHAN.

My bags?

AL-HAFI.

Well, then, the money that you must
Advance to Saladin.

NATHAN.

Is there nought further?

AL-HAFI.

Shall I be witness how from day to day
He 'll pare you down e'en to the very quick?
Shall I be witness that extravagance,
From out the barns—which once ne'er empty were—
Of a wise charity, borrows so long—
Borrows and borrows—till are starved to death
E'en the poor native mice therein? Perchance
You may imagine to yourself that he,
Who of your gold is needy, your advice
Will also take?—He follow your advice!—
And when did Saladin e'er let himself
Be counsell'd?—Only, Nathan, think of this:
What at his hands has just befallen me?

NATHAN.

Well, what?

AL-HAFI.

I came to him just as at chess
He with his sister play'd—not ill she plays;
The game, which Saladin consider'd lost,
And had already given up, stood there
Just as they left it. I look'd on and saw
'Twas far from lost.

NATHAN.

What a discovery
Was that for you!

AL-HAFI.

He with his king could move
Up to the pawn, and out of check.—I would
That on the spot I might to you show this!

NATHAN.

I 'll trust you!

AL-HAFI.

So the rook came into play,
And Sittah's game was lost.—All that to him
I wish'd to show, and cried to him.—Just think . . .

NATHAN.

He disagreed with you?

AL-HAFI.

He listen'd not,
But dash'd the board contemptuously down.

NATHAN.

Is 't possible?

AL-HAFI.

And said: To be checkmated
Was just what he desired; he wish'd it mate!
Call you that playing?

NATHAN.

Scarcely so; that was
To make sport of the game.

AL-HAFI.

And yet the stake
Was no deaf nut.

NATHAN.

Ah! money come, or go!
That is the least of it. But not to hear you!
And on a point of such importance, too,
Not once to hear you, and your eagle glance
Not to admire it: that—that for vengeance calls!

AL-HAFI.

Ah! what? I only tell you this that you
May see what kind of mind he has. In short,
I 'll stay with him no longer. Up and down
'Mongst all the dirty Moors here now I 've run,
Asking who 'll lend him. I, who for myself
Ne'er begg'd, must now for other people borrow.
To borrow 's not much better than to beg;
Just as to lend—to lend at usury—
Is surely not much better than to steal.
Amongst my Ghebers on the Ganges, I
Neither of these shall need, nor shall I need
To be a tool of either on the Ganges.
Upon the Ganges only there are men.
Here you 're the only man who to live there
Are worthy—will you go with me? To him
At once abandon all that trumpery
Which is his object.—Of it by degrees
Be sure that he will cheat you anyhow,
So were you done at once with all this teasing.—
I with a staff will furnish you, so come!

NATHAN.

I should have thought that would be left us still,

Hafi, e'en if the worst came to the worst.
Yet I 'll consider it, Al-Hafi. Wait . . .

AL-HAFI.

Consider! No, such matters brook not that.

NATHAN.

Only till from the Sultan I return:
Till I have taken leave . . .

AL-HAFI.

He who considers
Seeks only a pretext to venture nothing.
He who upon the instant can't decide
That for himself he 'll live, for aye must live
The slave of others.—As you please!—Farewell!
Since such you choose. My way lies there, yours there.

NATHAN.

Yet first I trust you 'll settle your affairs?

AL-HAFI.

Nonsense! not worth the reckoning is my balance.
For my accounts, Sittah or you will vouch.
Farewell! [*Exit* AL-HAFI.

NATHAN (*looking after him*).

Myself will vouch them!—Wild, good, honest—
How shall I call you, Hafi?—The true beggar
Is still alone and singly the true king!

[*Exit at the other side.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Scene lies in the Hall of Nathan's house.

RECHA—DAJA.

RECHA.

What was the expression which my father used?
'I may expect the Templar every minute?'
That sounds—nay, does it not?—as if he here
Would soon appear.—And yet how many minutes
Already are gone by!—Ah, well; who thinks
On minutes which have fled?—I will alone
Live on each coming minute. For that one
Which brings him hither will yet some time come.

DAJA.

O that accursèd message from the Sultan!
For surely but for that, Nathan at once
Would have him hither brought.

RECHA.

And if that minute

Should now have come; and if should be fulfill'd
My warmest and most fervent wish; what then?
What then?

DAJA.

What then? Why, then my warmest wish
Will also be fulfill'd, I hope.

RECHA.

What then
Will take its place within my breast, which knows not
Already how to lack a ruling wish?
Nothing? Ah, I am terrified! . . .

DAJA.

My wish
Will then of the fulfill'd one take the place:
My wish to know that thou in Europe art
In hands which worthy of thee are.

RECHA.

Thou'rt wrong—
That which makes that wish thine, the same prevents
It e'er becoming mine. Thy fatherland
Draws thee away; and should not mine keep me?
An image of thy relatives, not yet
Extinguish'd in thy heart, should it more power
Possess than those whom I can see, and grasp,
And hear,—my relatives?

DAJA.

Strive as you will
'Gainst them, the ways of God are still God's ways;
And if it be thy rescuer himself
Through whom his God, for whom he fights, would lead

Thee to that people and that land for which
Thou hast been born . . .

RECHA.

What say'st thou now again?
Thou hast, dear Daja, notions truly strange!
'*His* God, *for* whom he fights!' Then who owns God?
What kind of God is he that by a man
Is own'd—who for himself must let him fight?—
And how knows one which of the clods of earth
One has been born for, if 'tis not for that
On which one has been born?—If Nathan heard thee!—
What has he done to thee, that thou shouldst aye
Show in a dazzling light my happiness
As far remote from him as possible?
What has he done to thee, that thou shouldst mix
So willingly the seeds of reason, which
He in my heart with purity has strew'd,
With weeds or flowers cull'd from thy fatherland?
Not on my soil, dear Daja, will he have
Thy variegated flowers!—And I must tell thee,
That I myself do feel my soil, e'en when
'Tis clad so beauteously by thee, so weaken'd,
And so exhausted through thy flowers; I feel
How by their scent, their sour-sweet scent, I am
So stupefied, so giddy made!—Thy brain
To it is more inured. Therefore I blame not
The stronger nerves that can it tolerate.

It suits not me; already has thy angel
Nearly befool'd me!—And still of the farce
Before my father I 'm ashamed!

DAJA.

The farce!—
As if reason were only here at home!
Farce! farce! O that I only dared to speak!

RECHA.

Darest thou not? When was I not all ear?
Oft as it pleased thee me to entertain
With stories of the champions of thy faith,
Have I not always cheerfully their deeds
With admiration paid, and with my tears
Their sufferings? Their faith to me, indeed,
Never appear'd in them the most heroic.
And yet to me so much more comforting
The lesson was: that loyalty to God
Depends not so entirely on our dreams
Regarding Him.—Dear Daja, *that* so oft
To us my father said; regarding it
Thou hast thyself with him so oft agreed;
Why, then, behind his back *that* undermine,
Which thou when present with him help'd to build?
Dear Daja, this no converse is with which
We may the best await our friend. With me
Indeed 'tis so! for on my mind their lies
Unceasingly the thought if also he . . .
But, hark! comes there not some one to our door?
If it be he! Hark!

SCENE II.

RECHA, DAJA, *and the* TEMPLAR, *to whom an attendant outside opens the door, with these words :—*

ATTENDANT.

This way, sir!

RECHA (*starts, composes herself, and is about to fall at his feet*).

'Tis he—

My rescuer!

TEMPLAR.

This to avoid it was
That I 've appear'd so late; and yet—

RECHA.

I will
E'en at the feet of this proud man thank God
Yet once again—I will not thank the man.
This man will not have thanks—them he will have
As little as the water-pail, which proved
Of service in extinguishing the fire.
It let itself be fill'd, and emptied too,
Nothing to me or thee; and so this man.
So also did he plunge into the flames,
And there into his arms by chance I fell;
There I by chance remain'd, just like a spark
Upon his cloak, lock'd in his arms; until
Again—I know not how—we both escaped.
What is there to thank *there?*—In Europe, wine

Impels men to far other deeds.—The Templars—
They in this way are bound to act! They 're bound,
Like somewhat better trained dogs, to fetch
As well from fire as water.

TEMPLAR (*who has all this time been observing what passes, astonished and agitated*).

Daja! Daja!
If I in moments of distress and spleen
Have with ill-temper treated thee, O why
Tell here each folly that escaped my lips?
That, Daja, was revenge too sensitive!
Yet if thou 'lt but from this time forth with her
Me better represent . . .

DAJA.

Methinks, Sir Knight,
These little stings thrown at her heart have not
Much injured you.

RECHA.

How? you had griefs, and were
More niggard of your griefs than of your life?

TEMPLAR.

Thou good and kindly child!—Now is my heart
'Twixt eye and ear divided!—*That* was not,—
No, no, 'twas not the girl whom from the fire
I snatch'd.—For who could her have known, and not
Snatch'd her from out the flames? Who would for me
Have waited? Yea—disfigured—'twas the fright—
(*A pause, during which he gazes on her entranced.*)

RECHA.

But *you* I find still quite the same as then.
(*The pause continues until she goes forward in order to interrupt him in his reverie.*)
Tell us, Sir Knight, where you have been so long?—
I might almost have ask'd: Where are you now?

TEMPLAR.

I am—where I perhaps ought not to be—

RECHA.

Where have you been?—Where you ought not to be?
That's not well.

TEMPLAR.

On—on—what 's the mountain call'd?—
On Sinai.

RECHA.

Sinai? Ah, that 's charming! Now
I can with confidence at once learn this,
If it be true . . .

TEMPLAR.

What? what? If it be true
That there one looks upon the very spot
Where in God's presence Moses stood, when he .

RECHA.

O no! not so. Where'er he stood, he stood
In presence of his God. Of that to me
Enough 's already known. I fain from you
Would learn if it be true, that 'tis by far
Less arduous this mountain to ascend
Than to descend it?—Lo! the contrary
It was with me when mountains I have climb'd.—

Well, then, Sir Knight, what do you say to this?
What?—Turn away from me? Not look at me?

TEMPLAR.

Because I wish to hear you.

RECHA.

Better 'tis
That you 'd not have me see that you are smiling
At my simplicity; and that you smile
Because in truth I know to ask of you
Nought more important of this holiest
Of holy mountains. Is 't not so?

TEMPLAR.

Then I
Must look again into those eyes of yours?—
What? Now cast you them down? Do you that smile
Suppress? Do you keep silence, whilst I would
Read first in looks, in doubtful looks, what I
Hear so distinctly, what to me you say
So audibly? Ah, Recha! with what truth
He said to me: 'If her you only knew!'—

RECHA.

Who to you said it? and of whom was 't said?

TEMPLAR.

'If her you only knew!' of you to me
Your father said.

DAJA.

Did I not say so too?
Said I not also that?

TEMPLAR.

But where is he?
Where is your father? With the Sultan still?

RECHA.

Doubtless he is.

TEMPLAR.

Still there? Is he still there?
O, how forgetful I! No, no, he there
Is scarcely any longer.—Certainly
He at the convent will be waiting me.
That we, methinks, had fix'd. Excuse me, then:
I go to bring him . . .

DAJA.

That my business is.
Stay, then, Sir Knight; I'll bring him instantly.

TEMPLAR.

Not so, not so! Me he expects, not you.
Besides, 'tis possible—who knows?—he might
Be with the Sultan easily—you him
Know not!—might easily embarrass'd be.—
Believe me, he's in danger if I go not.

RECHA.

Danger! What danger? What?

TEMPLAR.

Danger for me,
For you, for him, unless I hasten there. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

RECHA—DAJA.

RECHA.

What is it, Daja?—Why so quick away?
What was it struck him? and what drives him hence?

DAJA.

O, heed it not. 'Tis no bad sign, methinks.

RECHA.

Sign?—and of what?

DAJA.

That there within his mind
Is something passing. Now the pot's a-boil,
It should not overboil. Leave him alone.
'Tis now for you to act.

RECHA.

What should I do?
Incomprehensible as he art thou,
Daja, to me!

DAJA.

Now soon can you on him
All that unrest retaliate, which he
Has caused to you. But be not all too strict,
All too vindictive.

RECHA.

What thou speak'st of, *that*
Thou only know'st thyself.

DAJA.

And are you then
So calm again already?

RECHA.

That I am;
Yes, that I am . . .

DAJA.

But this at least confess,
That you rejoice in his disquietude,
And thank him for the calm you now enjoy.

RECHA.

Of that I'm quite unconscious! For at most
What I'd confess is this: that I myself
Marvel that such a storm within my heart
Should by such calm be follow'd suddenly.
Me his whole look, his speech, his actions have . . .

DAJA.

Already satisfied?

RECHA.

That I'll not say;
No, far from that—they have not satisfied . . .

DAJA.

They've thy hot hunger but appeased.

RECHA.

Well, yes;
If you'll so have it.

DAJA.

'Tis not so with me.

RECHA.

Dear to me as my life he'll ever be,

Nay, than my life more dear: although
My pulse no longer thrills at his mere name;
Although my heart—whene'er I think of him—
More quickly and more strongly beats no longer.—
Why do I prattle thus? Dear Daja, come—
Come to the window now again which looks
Out on the palms.

DAJA.

So 'tis not quite appeased—
That ardent hunger.

RECHA.

Now again I 'll see
The palms: not merely him who 'neath them walks.

DAJA.

This coldness a new fever but begins.

RECHA.

What coldness? I 'm not cold. I look, in truth,
Not the less gladly upon that which I
With calmness see. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

An Audience-hall in Saladin's Palace.

SALADIN—SITTAH.

SALADIN (*to some one without as he enters*).

Bring the Jew here, so soon
As he arrives. It seems, indeed, as if
He cared not to make haste.

SITTAH.

He was, perchance,
Not in the way, not to be found at once.

SALADIN.

My sister dear!

SITTAH.

Brother, thou act'st as if
A battle was in store for thee.

SALADIN.

And *that*
With arms which I have never learn'd to wield.
I must dissemble; must be on my guard;
Must lay my snares; must put him to the test.
When could I this have done? Where thus to act
Have learnt?—And wherefore must all this be done?
To fish out money!—Money!—From a Jew
To extort money! money! Now at last
Am I to such small stratagems reduced,
Of trifles the most trifling to acquire?

SITTAH.

Each trifle, too much scorn'd, itself avenges.

SALADIN.

'Tis true, alas!—And if this Jew should be
A man so good, and so intelligent,
As formerly the Dervish him described?

SITTAH.

Well, then! What need is there for stratagem?
But for the niggard, anxious, timid Jew
The snare must lie; not for the good, and wise.
The last is ours already without snare.

The pleasure to hear how a man like this
Himself expresses, and with what bold strength
He rends the cords, or with what cunning foresight
He from the net gets free; this pleasure hast thou
Over and above.

SALADIN.

Well, that's true indeed;
I certainly on that account rejoice.

SITTAH.

Nought further, therefore, can embarrass you.—
For if he's merely one out of the crowd;
And a Jew merely, as a Jew; towards him
You'll yet not be ashamed so to appear
As he regarding all men thinks! Nay rather,
He, who to him as better shows himself,
Shows himself as a coxcomb and a fool.

SALADIN.

Then I must meanly act, in order that
The mean man may not meanly think of me?

SITTAH.

Yea, truly! if thou call'st it acting meanly,
To use each thing according to its kind.

SALADIN.

What has a woman's head contrived, which it
How to excuse knows not?

SITTAH.

How to excuse?

SALADIN.

The fine and pointed thing, with all my care,
Will break in pieces in my awkward hands!—

So that which would be carried out, as it
Has been contrived, must with all cleverness
And cunning be achieved.—Yet so be it—
So let it be! I'll dance as best I can;
And could, indeed, do so—yet rather worse
Than better.

SITTAH.

Trust not then thyself too little!
For thee I'll answer!—If thou only will'st.—
How fain would men like thee persuade us that
'Tis but their swords which their advancement brought.
The lion is ashamed, indeed, when he
Hunts with the fox: he's of the fox ashamed,
Not of the craft.

SALADIN.

How fain would women have
Man in subjection!—But now leave me; go!
I think that I my lesson well have learnt.

SITTAH.

What? Must I go?

SALADIN.

Surely thou 'dst not remain?

SITTAH.

No, not in sight, but in the adjoining room.—

SALADIN.

To listen there? No, if I may insist,
Sister, not so.—Away! away! He comes!
The curtain rustles.—Linger not! I'll watch thee.

(*While she goes out by one door, Nathan enters by another, and Saladin has seated himself.*)

SCENE V.

SALADIN—NATHAN.

SALADIN.

Draw nearer, Jew!—still nearer—close by me,
And have no fear!

NATHAN.

That's for thy foe to feel!

SALADIN.

Thy name is Nathan?

NATHAN.

Yes.

SALADIN.

Nathan 'the Wise'

NATHAN.

No.

SALADIN.

Well! if so thou callest not thyself,
The people call thee so.

NATHAN.

Perhaps, the people!

SALADIN.

I trust thou think'st not I regard with scorn
The people's voice?—Long have I wish'd to know
The man who by the people's call'd 'The Wise.'

NATHAN.

What if in mockery they call him so?
What if wise with the people nothing means

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But prudent? that he only prudent is
Who well his own advantage understands?

SALADIN.

Thou mean'st by that his own true interests?

NATHAN.

Then the most selfish were most prudent, too;
Then were, indeed, prudent and wise the same.

SALADIN.

I hear thee prove what thou wouldst contradict.
For man's true interests, which the people know not,
Thou knowest, or at least hast sought to know;
On these thou hast reflected: that alone
Makes 'the wise man.'

NATHAN.

Which each man thinks he is.

SALADIN.

But now of modesty enough! For it
To hear, where one expects dry reason, sickens.
(*He jumps up.*)
To business let us come! But candidly,
Jew, candidly.—

NATHAN.

Yes, surely 'tis my wish
To serve thee so that I may still remain
Worthy thy further custom.

SALADIN.

Serve me? how?

NATHAN.

Thou shalt the best of all, O Sultan, have;
And thou shalt have it at the fairest price.

SALADIN.

What dost thou speak of, Jew? Not of thy wares?—
With thee my sister shall the bargainer be.
(*Aside.* That for the listener.) With the merchant I
Have nought to do.

NATHAN.

Then doubtless you would know
What of the foe, who surely moves again,
I on my journey noted, or found out?
If openly I may . . .

SALADIN.

Nor on that topic
Your information would I tax. Of that
I know already all that I require.—
In short:—

NATHAN.

Command me, Sultan.

SALADIN.

I desire
On something very different from that
To gain instruction.—Since thou art so wise,
Tell me at once—what faith, what law it is
That has the most enlighten'd thee?

NATHAN.

I am,
Sultan, a Jew.

SALADIN.

And I a Mussulman.
Between us stands the Christian.—One alone
Can of these three religions be the true.—

A man like thee remains not standing there,
Where by the accident of birth he 's cast;
Or if he there remain, then he remains
Through insight, principles, or choice of what
To him the better seems. Impart thou then
To me thy insight; and the principles,
Which to examine I through lack of time
Have not been able, do thou let me hear;
And let me know—of course in confidence—
The choice which by these principles was fix'd,
That I may make them mine.—How? Thou 'rt surprised?
Thou scann'st me with thine eye.—It may well be
That I 'm the first 'mong sultans who e'er took
A crotchet such,—which yet, methinks, is not
Unworthy of a sultan.—Is 't not so?
Then answer! speak!—Or wouldst thou wish to have
A minute to reflect? I give it thee.—
(*Aside.* Has she heard all? I 'll take her by surprise;
I 'll hear if I have rightly done.) Reflect,
Quickly! My coming back I 'll not delay.

(*He goes into the adjoining room, into which his sister Sittah had retired.*)

SCENE VI.

NATHAN, *solus.*

NATHAN.

Well, well!—'tis wonderful! How is 't with me?

What does the Sultan want? What is 't he wants?
I had provided money, he wants—Truth.
Truth! and he wants it pure and unalloy'd,
As if 'twere coin!—As if 'twere e'en old coin,
Which in the scale is weigh'd.—Yet that might pass!
But coin so new, which the die but makes so,
Which o'er the counter only one may pay,
That it is not! As money in a bag,
So does one also in one's head store truth?
Who is then here the Jew? Is 't I or he?—
But how? Should he not then in truth ask truth?
But the suspicion that he truth employs
But as a trap, that were too mean!—Too mean?
What 's for the great too mean? Assuredly,
Abruptly he into the house so rush'd!
People should knock, and wait for 'Pray come in,'
When they approach as friends.—Yet I must walk
With heedfulness!—And how? how shall I that?
To choose to be a downright, thorough Jew—
That will not do.—And to be not at all
A Jew—will do still less. If I 'm no Jew,
Might he then ask why I 'm no Mussulman?
That 's it! that can save me!—Not children only
One feeds with tales.—He comes. Well, let him come.

Scene VII.

Saladin—Nathan.

SALADIN.

(*Aside.* Here, then, the field is clear.) I come not back
Too soon for thee? And thy reflection 's ended?
So now speak out! for no one hears us here.

NATHAN.

Might also the whole world us hear.

SALADIN.

Is Nathan
So certain of his cause? Ha! that I call
A wise man! never to conceal the truth!
For it to hazard all! Body and life!
Property and blood!

NATHAN.

Yes! if it be needful—
If it be of use.

SALADIN.

May I dare to hope
That I, from this time forth, may rightly bear
One of my titles, 'of the world and law
Reformer'?

NATHAN.

'Tis a glorious title, truly!
Yet ere to thee myself I quite confide,
Permit me to relate a Parable?

SALADIN.

Why not? Of Parables I 've always been
A friend, if they 're well told.

NATHAN.

To tell them well
Is not my *forte* exactly.

SALADIN.

There again
So proudly modest?—To your tale! proceed!

NATHAN.

In olden times a man lived in the East,
Who from a loving hand received a ring
Of priceless worth. The stone an opal was,
In which a hundred beauteous colours play'd;
Which had the secret power of rendering
The man who wore it, in that confidence,
Acceptable to God as well as man.
What wonder, then, that this man in the East
Therefore ne'er let that ring his finger quit,
And orders gave that in his house for aye
It should be kept? Accordingly the ring
Unto the dearest of his sons he left;
And fix'd that he again the ring should leave
To that one of his sons whom most he loved;
And that the dearest one should of the house
Always be head and Prince, without regard
To birth, in virtue of this ring alone.—
You understand me, Sultan?

SALADIN.

Yes, go on!

NATHAN.

So came from son to son this ring at last
To one who was the father of three sons,
Who all to him alike obedient were,
And all of whom, therefore, he could not cease
To love alike. Only from time to time,
Now this one, now another, now the third—
As each might chance to be alone with him,
And his o'erflowing heart the other two
Divided not—seem'd worthier of the ring,
Which from fond weakness he to each of them
Promised in turn. So it went on, as long
As it went on.—But when he came near death,
Then the good father greatly was perplex'd.
It pain'd him thus to slight two of his sons,
Who on his word relied.—What must he do?
In secret to a jeweller he sends,
And orders him to make two other rings
According to the pattern of his ring,
And bids him spare nor cost nor toil, so that
They may be like to it—exactly like.
The artist in this work succeeds so well,
That when the rings he brings, his pattern ring
The father is unable to discern.
Joyful he calls his sons, each one apart;
To each his separate blessing—and his ring
He gives—and dies. Thou hear'st me, Sultan?

SALADIN (*who has turned away from him in astonishment*).

I hear, I hear!—Finish thy story quickly.—
Will it soon end?

NATHAN.

Already it is ended;
For what is still to follow is of course.—
Scarce was the father dead, when each son comes
Bringing his ring, and each would of the house
Be lord. They sift, they quarrel, they accuse.
But all in vain; for not demonstrable
The right ring was;—

(*after a pause, during which he awaits the Sultan's reply*)

as undemonstrable
As now to us—the right faith is.

SALADIN.

How so?
Shall that the answer to my question be? . .

NATHAN.

This only my excuse should be, if I
Presume not to discern amongst the rings,
Which to be made were by the father caused
On purpose that they might not be discern'd.

SALADIN.

The rings!—Play not with me!—I should have thought
That the religions which I named to thee
Were well discernible e'en to the dress;
E'en to the meat and drink!

NATHAN.

And only not
Upon the side of their grand principles.—
Are they not all founded on history?

Written or handed down!—And history—
Must it not be on trust and faith alone
Received?—Is it not so?—Well, to whose trust
And faith do we attach least doubt? To that
Of our own friends? of those whose blood we are?
Of those who of their love have given us proofs
E'en from our childhood? Who us ne'er deceived,
Save where for us more salutary 'twas
That we should be deceived?—How can I then
Believe *my* fathers less than thou dost *thine?*
Again: can I from thee desire that thou
Shouldest to *thy* forefathers give the lie,
In order that thou may'st not *mine* gainsay?
Or the converse. So of the Christians also.
Is it not so?

SALADIN.

(*Aside.* Now, by the living God!
The man is in the right. I must be silent.)

NATHAN.

Now to our rings let us come back again.
As I have said: the sons accused each other;
And to the judge each swore that he the ring
Directly from his father's hands had had—
(Which also was the truth!)—after that he
Had from him long before the promise got,
That he one day the ring's prerogative
Should certainly enjoy—(no less the truth!).—
The father, each asserted, false to him
Could not have been; and ere he that of him—
Of such a loving father—could suspect:

He 'd sooner charge his brothers with foul play,
Though formerly of them only the best
He had been always ready to believe;
And he desired the traitors to find out,
That he on them might be avenged.

SALADIN.

And now,
The judge? I long to hear what thou wilt make
The judge to say. Proceed!

NATHAN.

The judge thus said:
Since you your father cannot here produce,
I from my seat must my opinion give.
Think you that to solve riddles I am here?
Or wait ye till the right ring opes its mouth?—
Yet stay! I hear that the right ring possesses
The wondrous power of making one beloved,
Acceptable to God as well as man.
That must decide! *That* the false rings to do
Will fail!—Now, whom love two of you the most?
Speak out! You 're silent? Work the rings but inwards,
Not outwards? Does each one love himself the most?
So you 're deceived deceivers, all the three!
Your rings—all three—are not the true. The true
Most probably was lost. The loss to hide,
Or to replace, your father three for one
Caused to be made.

SALADIN.

Excellent! O excellent!

NATHAN.

The judge went on to say: Therefore if you
Wish not my counsel, 'stead of my decree,
Depart!—But this my counsel is: that you
Should take the matter wholly as it lies.
Each of you from his father has a ring;
Each feels assured that his ring is the true.—
'Tis possible your father had the wish
No longer in his house to tolerate
Of the one ring the tyranny!—'Tis certain
That you all three he loved, loved all alike;
While he would not consent two to oppress,
That he might favour one. Well, then! Let each
Strive zealously to imitate that love
So uncorrupted—free from prejudice!
Let each of you with emulation strive
To bring to light the power of his ring's stone!
And let this power aid him with gentleness,
With hearty love of peace, benevolence,
And the sincerest loyalty to God!
If in your children's children the stone's powers
Are manifested, then I summon you,
When there have pass'd a thousand thousand years,
Again before this seat to stand. There then
Upon this seat a wiser man than I
Shall sit, and judgment give. Depart! So said
The modest judge.

SALADIN.

My God! my God!

NATHAN.

O Sultan,
If thou thyself shouldst feel that thou art he—
That promised wiser man . . .

SALADIN (*rushing up to him and seizing his hand, which he does not quit till the end of the scene*).

I that am dust?
I that am nothing? O my God!

NATHAN.

Why, Sultan?
What aileth thee?

SALADIN.

O Nathan! O dear Nathan!
The thousand thousand years have not expired.
Not mine the judge's seat.—Go—be my friend.

NATHAN.

Had Saladin nought more to say to me?

SALADIN.

Nothing.

NATHAN.

Nothing?

SALADIN.

Nothing at all.—Why ask you?

NATHAN.

I had yet wish'd the opportunity
Of making a request.

SALADIN.

Needs a request
An opportunity? Speak!

NATHAN.

I 've just come
From a far distant journey, during which
I 've debts collected.—And almost too much
Of ready cash I have;—and critical
The times begin to be again. Not well
I know how I may safely it invest.—
Then thought I, whether thou perchance mightst need
Something, because the near approach of war
Always demands of money a supply.

SALADIN (*looking him fixedly in the face*).

Nathan! I will not ask whether Al-Hafi
Has been with thee already;—will not ask
If a suspicion else impels thee not
To make this offer of thine own accord . . .

NATHAN.

What? Sultan, a suspicion?

SALADIN.

I deserve it.
You 'll pardon me!—What boots it?—I must e'en
Confess to thee—that I was on the point—

NATHAN.

Of seeking at my hands the very same?

SALADIN.

Yes, certainly.

NATHAN.

And thus we both are help'd!
That *all* my ready cash I cannot send
Is due to the young Templar. Him you know.
To him a large sum first I 've still to pay.

SALADIN.

Templar? Thou wilt not my worst foes support
With thy resources?

NATHAN.

I but speak of one
Whose life thou sparedst . . .

SALADIN.

Ah! of what dost thou
Remind me?—I had quite forgot that youth!—
Knowest thou him?—Where is he?

NATHAN.

How is this?
Then thou know'st not how much to me through him
Has of thy favour flow'd?—He, at the risk
Of his life newly gain'd, from out the fire
My daughter saved.

SALADIN.

He? Did he so? He look'd
As if he could have done so. *That,* in truth,
My brother also, whom he so resembles,
Would have done! Is he still here? Bring him hither!
Of this her brother, whom she never knew,
I've to my sister so much told, that I
His living image must now let her see!—
Go, fetch him!—How from *one* good deed, e'en though
It from mere passion sprung, there yet have flow'd
So many other like good deeds! Go, fetch him!

NATHAN (*letting go Saladin's hand*).

At once!—The other matter also holds? [*Exit.*

SALADIN.

Ah, would that I had let my sister listen!—
I must to her!—to her!—And how shall I
Unfold to her all that I have to tell?

[*Exit on the opposite side.*

SCENE VIII.

Under the palms, in the neighbourhood of the Convent, where the TEMPLAR *awaits* NATHAN.

The TEMPLAR *walks up and down contending with himself, till he thus breaks out:*

Wearied and silent here the victim stays.—
Well, I may not . . . may not more closely know
What's passing now within my breast; may not
Anticipate that which will come to pass.—
Enough that I have fled in vain; in vain.—
And I could nothing further do but fly!—
Well, come what will!—the blow too quickly fell
For me it to avoid; to yield to it,
So long, so much refused I.—Her to see,
Whom I so little did desire to see,—
To see her, to resolve that I would ne'er
Lose sight of her again—but what resolve?
Resolve is purpose, action; and I suffer,
Merely suffer.—To see her, and the feeling
Of being caught by her, with her bound up
That was all one—remains all one.—To live
Apart from her—I cannot think of that;

That were my death—and wheresoe'er we may
Be after death, there, too, 'twere e'en my death.—
If that be love, then loves the Templar Knight—
In truth, the Christian loves the Jewish girl.—
Well, what of that?—I 've in the Holy Land—
Therefore for me holy for evermore—
Much prejudice already laid aside.—
What wills my Order? I, the Templar, now
Am dead; was to it from that moment dead
Which me the captive made of Saladin.
The head he gave me—was it my old head?—
It is a newer head, which nothing knows
Of all that was talk'd into that old head
And fetter'd it;—and it 's a better one,
More suited to my Father's heaven above.
That I feel now. For now for the first time
With it begin I so to think as must
My father here have thought, if they of him
Tales have not lied to me.—Tales?—Are they tales?
Yet tales quite credible; which ne'er to me
Appear'd more credible than now, when I
The danger run of stumbling where he fell.—
He fell?—Rather with men I 'll fall than stand
With children.—His example to me vouches
For his approval. And on whose approval
Would I else lean?—On Nathan's? O, to me
Can his encouragement, more than approval,
Be yet less lacking?—What a Jew! and one
Who so completely but a Jew would seem?—
There comes he—comes in haste—with joy elated.

Who e'er from Saladin came otherwise?
Hey, Nathan!

SCENE IX.

NATHAN—*The* TEMPLAR.

NATHAN.

How? Is 't you?

TEMPLAR.

You very long
Have by the Sultan been detain'd.

NATHAN.

Not so!
In going there I was too much delay'd.—
Yes, truly, Curd; the man does with his fame
Accord indeed. His fame is but his shadow.—
Yet first of all let me at once say this . . .

TEMPLAR.

What is it, Nathan?

NATHAN.

He would speak with you;
Wills that you come to him without delay.
But first you must accompany me home,
Where I for him have something to provide;
And then we 'll go.

TEMPLAR.

Nathan, I enter not
Your house again until . . .

NATHAN.

Then you have there
Already been meanwhile? You 've talk'd with her?
Well!—Tell me, how my Recha pleases you?

TEMPLAR.

Beyond expression! Yet,—see her again
I never will! O never, nevermore!
Unless you promise me upon the spot
That her I shall be privileged to see
For ever and for ever.

NATHAN.

But how, Templar!
Would you have me *that* understand?

TEMPLAR (*after a short pause falling on Nathan's neck*).

My father!

NATHAN.

Young man!

TEMPLAR (*leaving him just as quickly*).

Not son?—O, I conjure you, Nathan!—

NATHAN.

Dear youth!

TEMPLAR.

Not son?—O, I entreat of you,
By the first bonds of nature I implore!
Prefer not later chains to them!—Be you
Content to be a man!—Repel me not!

NATHAN.

O dear, dear friend! . . .

TEMPLAR.

And son?—not son? Not that,
Even if gratitude has clear'd love's way
Already to your daughter's heart? Not that,
If both of us have waited but your beck
To melt in one?—O, why this silence, Nathan?

NATHAN.

Me you surprise, young Knight!

TEMPLAR.

Do I surprise you?
With your own thoughts surprise you?—In my mouth
Mistake you them? Surprise I you?

NATHAN.

Until
I know which of the Stauffens was your father!

TEMPLAR.

What say you, Nathan? What? At such a moment
Do you feel nought but curiosity?

NATHAN.

For look you! I myself have formerly
A Stauffen known, who, too, was Conrad call'd.

TEMPLAR.

Well—if my father should have had that name?

NATHAN.

Indeed?

TEMPLAR.

After my father I am call'd:
For Curd is Conrad.

NATHAN.

Well—*my* Conrad, then,

Was not your father; for he was, like you,
A Templar; he was never married.

TEMPLAR.

Ah!
And yet, Nathan!—

NATHAN.

What?

TEMPLAR.

Yet he may have been
My father.

NATHAN.

You 're in jest.

TEMPLAR.

And you too strictly
Take it!—What if a touch of bastardy
Were in the case? That sort may not be scorn'd.—
Yet now for aye you must absolve me, Nathan,
From giving proof of my progenitors;
And you from yours in turn I will absolve.
But not as if I threw the slightest doubt
On your tree of descent. Nay, God forbid!
It, leaf by leaf, e'en up to Abraham
You can trace back; and from that point still farther,
As well I know—I 'd even swear to it.

NATHAN.

You become bitter.—Yet deserve I that?—
Have I refused you anything? I would
Not at a moment take you at your word—
Nothing further.

TEMPLAR.

Are you sure? Nothing further?
O then forgive! . . .

NATHAN.

Well, only come! do come!

TEMPLAR.

Whither? No!—Home with you? No! There it burns!
Here I'll await you. Go then!—If again
Her I'm to see, I'll see her oft enough;
If not, then her already far too much
I've seen . . .

NATHAN.

I'll haste as much as possible.

SCENE X.

The TEMPLAR—*soon afterwards* DAJA.

TEMPLAR.

More than enough already!—In its grasp
The brain of man's so boundless; yet 'tis oft
All of a sudden full! e'en with a trifle
Of a sudden full—yet 'tis good for nothing,
For nothing, be it fill'd with what it will.—
Yet only patience! The inflated stuff
The soul condenses soon, and thus makes room—
And light and order come again.—Do I
Love, then, for the first time? Was that not love

Which I as love have known?—And is that love
Alone which now I feel?

DAJA (*who has glided in from the side*).
Sir Knight! Sir Knight!

TEMPLAR.
Who calls? Ha! Daja, you?

DAJA.
Past him I 've slipp'd;
But yet, as you stand there, us he could see.—
Come nearer to me, then, behind this tree.

TEMPLAR.
What is it?—So mysterious?—Say, what is 't?

DAJA.
A secret 'tis which brings me here to you;
A double secret. One know I alone,
The other you alone.—How if we now
Secrets exchange? You 'll yours confide to me,
Then to you I will mine confide.

TEMPLAR.
With pleasure!—
If only first I knew what mine you reckon.
Yet that will be made clear from yours.—Begin.

DAJA.
Just fancy that!—No, no, Sir Knight: you first;
I 'll follow.—For my secret, be assured,
Can be to you of none avail, unless
Yours I beforehand have.—Only be quick!—
For if I first examine you, then you
Will not in me have put your trust. My secret
Then rests my secret still; and you of yours

Are rid.—And yet, poor Knight, you men believe
That you a secret such can keep from woman!

TEMPLAR.

Yes, they oft secrets guess which we ourselves
Know not that we possess.

DAJA.

That may well be.
And therefore must I first the kindness do
Of making to yourself that secret known.—
Say: why was it that you so suddenly
From us did run away? that us you left
Thus sitting here? and that with Nathan now
You've not come back? Has Recha made on you
Such slight impression? how? or e'en so much?—
So much! so much!—Me you remind, in truth,
Of the continued fluttering of the bird,
Of the poor bird, which to the branch is limed.
In short: confess to me at once, that you
Love her, love her to madness; and to you
Something I'll tell . . .

TEMPLAR.

To madness? Verily:
The matter perfectly you understand.

DAJA.

Then grant me but the love; to you I'll leave
The madness.

TEMPLAR.

For it is a thing of course?
That I, a Templar, love a Jewish girl! . .

DAJA.

That seems, indeed, to show a lack of sense.—
And yet, at times there 's in a matter more
Of sense than we would e'en suspect; 'tis not
So quite unheard-of that the Saviour draws
Us to himself in ways which of himself
The prudent man not easily would tread.

TEMPLAR.

Sayest thou that so solemnly?—(*Aside.* And if
'Stead of the Saviour I put Providence:
Is she not right?) Me you more curious make
Than I at other times am wont to be.

DAJA.

This is the land of miracles!

TEMPLAR.

(*Aside.* Ah, well—
Of the miraculous. How otherwise
Can it well be? The whole world presses here.)
Yes, my dear Daja, hold you that confest,
Which you from me desire: that her I love;
That I cannot conceive how without her
I e'er shall live; that I . . .

DAJA.

O, is it true?
Is 't true? — Swear, Knight, to me to make her yours,
To save her *here* in time, and *there* for ever.

TEMPLAR.

And how?—How can I so?—How can I swear
What is not in my power?

DAJA.

'Tis in your power.
Within your power I bring it by one word.

TEMPLAR.

Against it has the father nought to say?

DAJA.

What father?—Father! He shall e'en be forced.

TEMPLAR.

Daja, be forced? He's not yet fall'n 'mongst thieves.
He must not be compell'd.

DAJA.

He must consent;
Yes, he must willingly consent at last.

TEMPLAR.

Must? willingly?—What if I tell you, Daja,
That I already have myself attempted
To strike that chord with him?

DAJA.

And he refused?

TEMPLAR.

He did agree, but with a discord which
Offended me.

DAJA.

What say you? How? You had
Let him but see the shadow of a wish
For Recha, and he did not leap for joy?
Coldly repell'd you? and raised obstacles?

TEMPLAR.

'Twas almost so.

DAJA.

Then not a moment longer
I 'll hesitate.—(*A pause.*)

TEMPLAR.

And yet you hesitate?

DAJA.

The man is otherwise so good!—To him
I myself owe so much!—And yet, that he
Should so refuse to hear!—God only knows
That to compel him thus makes my heart bleed.

TEMPLAR.

O Daja, I entreat of you at once
Me to release from this uncertainty;
But if you still yourself uncertain be
Whether to call what you intend to do
Evil or good, shameful or laudable:—
Be silent! As for me, I will forget
That you have anything you would conceal.

DAJA.

That spurs me on, not holds me back. Well, then,
Know this: that Recha is no Jewess, she—
She is a Christian.

TEMPLAR.

So? I wish you joy!
You 've had hard labour; yet let not the pains
You terrify! Continue, then, with zeal
To people heaven, since you no longer earth
Can people!

DAJA.

How, Sir Knight? Deserves my news

This scorn from you? That Recha is a Christian,
That now no more rejoices you, a Christian,
A Templar, who love her?

TEMPLAR.

Especially
As she a Christian is of your own making.

DAJA.

Ah! do you understand it so? Well, then,
So let it be! I' faith!—him will I see
Who shall convert her! 'Tis her fate, for long
To have been that for being which she 's spoil'd.

TEMPLAR.

Explain yourself, or—leave me!

DAJA.

She 's a Christian,
Of Christian parents born; likewise baptized . . .

TEMPLAR (*hastily*).

And Nathan?

DAJA.

Is not her father!

TEMPLAR.

What! Nathan
Not her father?—Know you what you say?

DAJA.

I speak the truth, which oft has made me weep
E'en tears of blood.—He 's not her father, no . .

TEMPLAR.

And has he as his daughter brought her up?
And has a Christian child been as a Jewess
Brought up?

DAJA.

Most certainly.

TEMPLAR.

And she knew not
What she was born?—She ne'er from him had heard
That she was born a Christian, and no Jewess?

DAJA.

Never!

TEMPLAR.

In this delusion he the child
Not only has brought up, but leaves the girl
In this delusion still?

DAJA.

'Tis true, alas!

TEMPLAR.

Nathan—How? Nathan wise and good,—did he
The voice of nature thus allow himself
To falsify?—and so to misdirect
The o'erflow of a heart which would have follow'd
Quite other paths, if left but to itself?
O Daja, you to me have certainly
Something of weight confided—which may have
Results—which me perplexes—on which I
Know not at once what 'tis that I should do.—
Then give me time.—Go now! For he again
Will pass this way, and he might us surprise.
Go!

DAJA.

I should faint with fear!

TEMPLAR.

I do not feel
Quite capable of speaking to him now.
If you should meet him, only say to him
That at the Sultan's we 'll each other meet.

DAJA.

Show not you've aught against him.—That should give
But the last pressure to the thing; for you
All scruples should remove respecting Recha!
But if to Europe you should take her, me
You will not leave behind?

TEMPLAR.

That we 'll see. Leave me.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Cloisters of the Convent.

The LAY-BROTHER—*and soon afterwards the* TEMPLAR.

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes! for the Patriarch 'tis all very well!
And yet, in truth, of all that he to me
Has so committed, not much has succeeded.—
But wherefore does he nought but such affairs
Entrust to me?—I care not to be cunning;
Nor to talk people over; nor to pry,
Nor meddling be in everything.—Have I
Of my own will said to the world farewell
For this: that for the sake of others I
Should with the world throughly embroil myself?

TEMPLAR (*approaching him hurriedly*).

Good Brother! you are there. I 've sought you long.

LAY-BROTHER.

Me, sir?

TEMPLAR.

Already you 've forgotten me?

LAY-BROTHER.

No, no! I thought that in this world again
I ne'er should meet you. This I hoped to God,
To the good God, who knows how hard to me
Was that proposal which me duty bound
To make to you. HE knows if I desired
To find in you an open ear; HE knows
How greatly, how sincerely I rejoiced,
That without hesitation, in plain terms,
A proposition you rejected, which
Did not beseem a knight.—Yet now you come!
Is it that after-thoughts have wrought a change?

TEMPLAR.

Know you already why it is I come?
I scarcely know myself.

LAY-BROTHER.

You've now consider'd—
You've now found out that he was not so wrong—
I mean the Patriarch; that through his proposal
Both gold and glory may be won; you've found
A foe's a foe even although he had
Seven times our angel proved. This you have now
With flesh and blood consider'd, and you come
Again yourself to offer.—O my God!

TEMPLAR.

My pious and dear man! rest you content.
On that account I come not; and thereon
I would not with the Patriarch speak. Still, still
On that point think I as I thought before;

And would not lose, for all the world can give,
That good opinion of which me, a man
So upright, pious, and so dear, once worthy
Deem'd.—Here I 've merely come that I advice
May from the Patriarch ask upon a matter. . . .

LAY-BROTHER.

You from the Patriarch ask advice? A knight
Consult—a priest? (*looking round timidly*).

TEMPLAR.

Yes; for the matter is
A somewhat priestly one.

LAY-BROTHER.

Yet of the knight
The priest ne'er asks advice, although the matter
Be e'er so knightly.

TEMPLAR.

For he's privileged
Transgression to commit; a privilege
For which by none of us he much is envied.—
In truth, if for myself I had to act,
If I must give account to myself only,
Then of your Patriarch what need have I?
But certain things I 'd rather badly do
At other's will, than rightly at my own.—
Besides, religion is—I now see well—
Nothing but party; and whoever thinks
That he 's in it impartial, his own faith,
And it alone—although unconsciously—
Upholds. Since that is so, it must be right.

LAY-BROTHER.

Upon that point I 'd rather silent be,
For, sir, I do not understand you rightly.

TEMPLAR.

And yet!—(*Aside.* But let me see what 'tis I want
Precisely! a decision or advice?—
Simple or learn'd advice?)—I thank you, Brother,
Thank you for your good hint.—A Patriarch?
Why?—Be you my Patriarch!—since I 'll ask
The Christian rather in the Patriarch,
Than the Patriarch in the Christian. The matter
Is simply this . . .

LAY-BROTHER.

Say no more, sir, no more!
For to what purpose?—You mistake me, sir!
He who knows much has also many cares;
I 've credited myself with only one.—
'Tis well! hark—look! there by good chance for me
He comes himself.—Remain you standing here.
He has already seen you.

SCENE II.

The PATRIARCH, *who with all ecclesiastical pomp comes up one of the cloisters—the* LAY-BROTHER—*the* TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

Would that I
Could him avoid!—He's not the man for me!—

A portly, ruddy, smirking prelate he!
And what parade!

LAY-BROTHER.

You should have seen him first
Marching to court. He from a sick-bed comes
At present.

TEMPLAR.

And comes in such pomp and state
As might not shame e'en Saladin himself.

PATRIARCH (*who approaches and signs to the Lay-Brother*).

Come hither!—That 's the Templar. What would he?

LAY-BROTHER.

I know not.

PATRIARCH (*approaching the Templar while the Lay-Brother and the retinue retire*).

Well, Sir Knight!—I 'm much rejoiced
To see the good young man! Ah, still so young!—
Now, with God's help, something may come of this.

TEMPLAR.

Scarce more, your Reverence, than already is;
And rather something less.

PATRIARCH.

I wish, at least,
That for the sake of Christianity,
And for the honour and the benefit
Of God's own cause, a knight so pious—long
May bloom and flourish! And that cannot fail,
If age's ripe advice young valour will

But chivalrously follow!—How can I
Else serve you, sir?

TEMPLAR.

With that wherein my youth
Is greatly wanting; namely, with advice.

PATRIARCH.

Right willingly!—Yet it must be accepted.

TEMPLAR.

And yet not blindly.

PATRIARCH.

Who, sir, says it must?
Ah! no man, truly, must omit to use
The reason which God gave him, where aright
'Tis exercised. But is it everywhere
Thus exercised aright? No, certainly!
Thus, for example: when God honours us
Through one of his own angels,—that's to say,
Through one of those who minister his word,—
By pointing out a means whereby the weal
Of Christendom, the safety of the Church,
In any special and peculiar way
May be promoted or be fortified,
Who shall dare undertake by Reason's aid
To sift His will who Reason did create?
And the eternal law of Heaven's great glory
By petty rules of honour vain to gauge?—
Of this enough!—What is the business, then,
On which you our advice desire to have?

TEMPLAR.

Suppose, most reverend Father, that a Jew

Should have an only child—a girl—whom he
Has with the greatest care to every good
Brought up; that her more than his soul he loves;
That him with fondest love she loves in turn;
And that now any one were told that she
Is not the daughter of the Jew; that he
In childhood her adopted, bought, or stole—
Or what you will. 'Tis known that this girl is
A Christian's child, and that she was baptized;
That by the Jew she was brought up a Jewess;
That as a Jewess he lets her remain,
And as his daughter:—say, then, reverend Father,
What it in such a case were right to do?

PATRIARCH.

I shudder!—Yet, sir, first of all declare
If this be fact, or but hypothesis?
That is to say, is this case merely fiction,
Or has it happen'd, does it still go on?

TEMPLAR.

I thought that 'twas all one, if I might but
Obtain your views upon it, reverend Father.

PATRIARCH.

All one?—Behold, sir, how proud human Reason
Will in regard to spiritual things go wrong.—
By no means! If the case which you propound
Be but a play of fancy, it would not
Repay the toil of weighing it in earnest.
I would refer you to the theatre,
Where things like that can be with much applause
Treated both *pro* and *contra*.—If it be

Not merely what 's at best dramatic farce;
If the case be a fact; if it has happen'd
Within our diocese, or our loved city,
Jerusalem;—then, in that case,—

TEMPLAR.

What then?

PATRIARCH.

Then 'twere imperative to execute
Upon the Jew those rigid penalties
Which Papal and Imperial laws decree
Against such wickedness, such blasphemy!

TEMPLAR.

Indeed?

PATRIARCH.

And the aforesaid laws condemn
A Jew, who to apostasy perverts
A Christian, to the stake—to death by fire—

TEMPLAR.

Indeed?

PATRIARCH.

And how much more condemn the Jew
Who tears with violence a Christian child
From its baptismal bonds! For is not all
That 's done to children done by violence?—
That is to say, except what the Church does
To children.

TEMPLAR.

If the child would then have died
A miserable death, had not the Jew
On it compassion had?

PATRIARCH.

That matters not!
The Jew would still be burnt.—For better 'twere
That it in wretchedness died here, than that
It was so saved to its eternal ruin.—
And why, besides, has the Jew God forestall'd?
God can without him save whom He will save.

TEMPLAR.

Save, too, methinks, for aye in spite of him.

PATRIARCH.

That matters not! The Jew would still be burnt.

TEMPLAR.

That nearly touches me! Especially
As it is said, that he brought up the girl
Not in his own, but rather in no faith,
And she of God nor more nor less was taught
Than might suffice for Reason.

PATRIARCH.

What of that?
The Jew would still be burnt . . . Yea, he deserves
On that account alone to be thrice burnt!—
What? To grow up without a faith, a child
Should be allow'd? How? Not at all to teach
A child the important duty of belief?
That is too bad! I wonder much that you . . .

TEMPLAR.

The rest, if God so will it, reverend Sir,
At the confessional. (*Is going.*)

PATRIARCH.

What, sir, no answer?

You will not name to me the scoundrel Jew?
You will not on the spot go fetch him here?
O! I know what to do! Immediately
I'll to the Sultan.—Saladin is bound
Us to protect—by the Capitulation
To which he took his oath—in all the rights
And doctrines which in our most holy faith
We ever hold! Thank God, the original
We have. We have his seal and signature.
I'll also easily make him conceive
That infidelity is for the State
A dangerous thing! All civil ties are loosed
And torn asunder, if man nought believes.—
Away! away with wickedness like that! . . .

TEMPLAR.

I'm sorry that I have not leisure now
So excellent a sermon to enjoy!
To Saladin I have been summon'd now.

PATRIARCH.

Indeed?—At present?—Then . . .

TEMPLAR.

I in advance
The Sultan will prepare, if it so please you.

PATRIARCH.

Oh, oh!—I know, sir, that with Saladin
You've favour found!—I beg that I may be
Kindly by him remember'd . . . 'Tis alone
Zeal for the Lord that influences me.
What I may do too much, I do for Him.—
That you'll, I pray, consider!—And, Sir Knight,

Is 't not the case that but a problem 'twas
Which you before related of the Jew?—
That is to say . . .

TEMPLAR.

A problem! [*Exit.*

PATRIARCH.

(*Aside.* Which I must
Much deeper sift. That were again an office
For Brother Bona-fides.) Here, my son!
(*Speaking as he goes out to the Lay-Brother.*)

SCENE III.

A room in SALADIN'S *Palace, into which are brought by slaves numerous bags, and are placed on the floor beside each other.*

SALADIN—*and soon afterwards* SITTAH.

SALADIN.

Now, truly, there 's no end of this.—Is much
As yet to come?

A SLAVE.

There 's still the half.

SALADIN.

Bear, then,
The rest to Sittah.—But where stays Al-Hafi?
Al-Hafi shall all this immediately
Himself receive. Or would it not be best
That to my father it were sent? For here

It would but through my fingers slip.—In truth,
One's apt at last hard to become; and now
It certainly shall artifices cost
From me much to extract—at least until
The monies have to hand from Egypt come;
E'en for itself may poverty look out!—
But yet the expenses of the Sepulchre,
These must go on! But yet with empty hands
The Christian pilgrims must not go away!
But yet . . .

SITTAH (*entering*).

What, Saladin! does all this mean?
Why all this gold to me?

SALADIN.

Out of it, sister,
Pay thou thyself; if aught's o'er, store it up.

SITTAH.

Is Nathan not yet with the Templar here?

SALADIN.

He seeks him everywhere.

SITTAH.

Look you, what here
I've found while through my hands old ornaments
Were passing (*shows him a miniature*).

SALADIN.

Ha! my brother! Ha! 'tis he!—
Was he! *was* he, alas!—O brave dear youth,
Why was it that I thee so early lost?
What might not I—with thee, and at thy side—
Have undertaken!—Sittah, leave with me

That portrait. It at once I recognise;
He gave it to his elder sister Lilla,
Who, on one morning, most unwilling was
To let him quit her fond embrace. It was
The last time that he e'er rode out.—Ah, I
Let him ride out, and all alone! Alas!
She died of grief, and ne'er forgave me that
I let him ride alone.—He ne'er return'd!

SITTAH.

Ah, my poor brother!

SALADIN.

Let it pass! One day
We all shall go away ne'er to return!—
Besides—who knows?—death is not that alone
Which of a youth like him frustrates the aims.
He has more foes;—the strongest oft succumbs
E'en as the weakest.—Be that as it may!—
With the young Templar yet must I compare
This picture, and must see how far my fancy
Has me deceived.

SITTAH.

Therefore I brought it thee.
But yet give me the picture, give it me!
For this I 'll say: a woman's eye does best
This understand.

SALADIN (*to an attendant who enters*).

Who 's there? Is it the Templar?—
Let him come!

SITTAH.

You not to disturb, and him

Not by my curious prying to perplex—
(*She seats herself sideways on a sofa, and veils herself.*)

SALADIN.

'Tis well! 'tis well! (And now as for his voice—
How will that be?—Still Assad's voice, I trust,
Sleeps somewhere in my heart!)

SCENE IV.

SALADIN—*the* TEMPLAR.

TEMPLAR.

I, as thy captive.

SALADIN.

My captive? He to whom I give his life—
To him shall I not also give his freedom?

TEMPLAR.

What it becometh thee to do, it me
Becomes e'en to accept, not presuppose.
But, Sultan,—thanks, especial thanks to thee
To render, for that thou hast spared my life,
Accords not with my class and character;—
Again 'tis, anyhow, at thy command.

SALADIN.

Only you must not use it 'gainst myself!—
I two hands more, in truth, did willingly
Yield to my foe. But to him such a heart
Thus to accord, ah! that for me is hard.—
In nought regarding thee, thou brave young man,
I've been deceived! In soul and body thou

Art my own Assad. Lo! I could ask thee
Where during all this time thou hast been hid?
And in what secret cavern thou hast slept?
By what good Peri, in what Spirit-land,
So fresh this flower has ever been preserved?
Lo! I could wish thee to remind what we
Did carry out together here and there;
Chide thee because thou kept'st from me *one* secret!
And hast from *one* adventure cut me out!—
That could I do, if I look'd but on thee,
Not on myself.—Well, be that as it may!
Of that sweet dream there 's yet so much that 's true,
That in my autumn there shall bloom again
For me an Assad.—Thou 'rt, I trust, content?

TEMPLAR.

All, Sultan, all that comes from thee to me—
Let it be what it will—lies like a wish
Within my heart.

SALADIN.

Then let us to the test
Put it at once.—Wilt thou abide with me?
Near me?—As Christian or as Mussulman:
'Tis all the same to me! In the white cloak,
Or Jamerlonk; turban'd, or in thy felt:
E'en as thou wilt! 'Tis all the same! I ne'er
Have wish'd that but *one* bark all trees should have.

TEMPLAR.

Else wouldst thou scarce have been what now thou art:
The hero, and the gardener of the Lord.

SALADIN.

Well, then, if thou think'st nothing worse of me,
Then we 're already half true friends.

TEMPLAR.

Quite true.

SALADIN (*offering him his hand*).

One word!

TEMPLAR (*clasping Saladin's hand*).

One man!—Herewith receive thou more
Than thou couldst take from me. I 'm wholly thine.

SALADIN.

O! for one single day 'tis too much gain!—
Too much!—Came he not with you here?

TEMPLAR.

Who?

SALADIN.

Nathan.

TEMPLAR (*coldly*).

No. I came alone.

SALADIN.

What a deed was thine!
And what a lucky chance, that such a deed
Proved for the benefit of such a man!

TEMPLAR.

Yes, yes!

SALADIN.

So cold?—O no, young man, if God
Some good through us performs, we must not be
So cold!—must not wish, e'en through modesty,
To seem so cold!

TEMPLAR.

That in this world each thing
Should have so many sides!—of which one oft
Cannot make out how they agree.

SALADIN.

Hold thou
Aye by the best, and praise thou God, who knows
How they agree!—But if, young man, thou 'lt be
So hard to please, then must I keep myself
Upon my guard with thee. Ah! I, too, am
A thing of many sides, which oft may seem
As if they did not rightly fit.

TEMPLAR.

That pains me!—
So little 'tis my failing to suspect . . .

SALADIN.

But tell me, now, to whom dost thou refer?
Nathan, 'twould almost seem.—How? Suspect him?
Thou?—Nay, explain thyself! speak out! Give me
The first proof of thy confidence.

TEMPLAR.

'Gainst Nathan
I 've nought to say. 'Tis with myself alone
That I am angry—

SALADIN.

And for what?

TEMPLAR.

That I
Had dream'd a Jew could that he was a Jew
Forget: that whilst awake I so had dream'd.

SALADIN.

Out with this waking dream!

TEMPLAR.

Thou knowest, Sultan,
'Bout Nathan's daughter. What for her I did,
I did—because I did it. Too proud I
To reap those thanks which I had never sown—
I day by day disdain'd to see the girl.
The father then was far away. He comes;
He hears; he seeks me out; he thanks; he wishes
His daughter may please me; and speaks
Of prospects and a brilliant future.—I
Let myself be persuaded, come, see, find
A girl indeed! . . . Ah, Sultan, I 'm ashamed!

SALADIN.

Ashamed?—that on thee an impression made
A Jewish girl, yet nothing more than that?

TEMPLAR.

That my rash heart so small resistance made
To this impression, caused by the fond talk
Of the girl's father!—I, a simpleton,
Sprang for the second time into the fire;—
For now I woo'd, and now was I disdain'd.

SALADIN.

Disdain'd?

TEMPLAR.

But not decisively am I
Refused by the wise father. He must first
Inquiries make; he must deliberate.
O certainly! Did I not do that too?

For did I not inquire? and did I not
Deliberate, when in the fire she cried?
Forsooth! By heavens! 'tis something fine, indeed,
To be so wise, and so considerate!

SALADIN.

Make some allowance for an aged man!
How long can his refusal then endure?
And will he this of thee desire, that thou
Shalt first become a Jew?

TEMPLAR.

Who knows?

SALADIN.

Who knows?—
One who this Nathan better knows—e'en he.

TEMPLAR.

The superstition in which we 've grown up,
E'en when we recognise it, loses not
On that account its influence over us;—
For not all those are free who scorn their chains.

SALADIN.

A ripe remark! Yet Nathan, Nathan truly . . .

TEMPLAR.

That superstition is the worst, which holds
Its own to be the more endurable . . .

SALADIN.

That may be! Yet Nathan . . .

TEMPLAR.

To it alone
To trust purblind humanity, until

'Tis to the clearer light of truth inured;
To it alone . . .

SALADIN.

All right! But what of Nathan?
Such weakness is not Nathan's lot.

TEMPLAR.

So also
I should have thought!—But if, nevertheless,
This model man is such a common Jew,
That he sought Christian children to possess,
That he might bring them up as Jews:—how then?

SALADIN.

Who says such things of him?

TEMPLAR.

The girl herself,—
With whom he me allures, with hope of whom
It seem'd that he was ready me to pay
For what it was supposed that I for her
Had not disinterestedly perform'd,—
This girl herself is not his daughter; she
Is a stray Christian child.

SALADIN.

Whom he to thee
Despite of that wills not to give?

TEMPLAR.

Wills he,
Or wills he not, he is found out! Yes, he
Who prates of toleration is found out!
I 'll know with dogs to hunt this Jewish wolf—

That philosophic sheep's-skin wears—which shall
Tear him to pieces.

SALADIN (*earnestly*).

Christian, be thou calm!

TEMPLAR.

What! shall a Christian hold his peace? For if
To Jew and Mussulman it be allow'd
To act as Jew and Mussulman, shall then
The Christian only drop the Christian's part?

SALADIN (*still more earnestly*).

Christian, be calm!

TEMPLAR.

The weight of the rebuke
Which Saladin into that term has press'd,
I fully feel. Ah! if I only knew
How in my place thy Assad would have acted!

SALADIN.

He!—Not much better!—Nay, 'tis probable,
Quite as impetuously!—But who has then
Taught you, like him, to bribe me with *one* word?
If all turns out, in truth, as you have told me,
Then scarcely can I Nathan recognise.—
Meanwhile, he is my friend, and of my friends
No one must with the other have a quarrel.—
Take my advice! Go warily to work!
And sacrifice him not to fanatics
Amongst thy people! and an action hide,
To punish which thy priests would lay on me.
From spite to any Jew or Mussulman,
Be not a Christian!

TEMPLAR.

Soon 'twere for that too late!
Yes, thanks be to the Patriarch's thirst for blood,
Whose tool I dreaded to become!

SALADIN.

How's that?
Sooner to him thou camest than to me?

TEMPLAR.

O yes! in passion's storm, and in the whirl
Of indecision!—Pardon me!—I fear
Thou wilt no longer wish to recognise
In me aught of thy Assad.

SALADIN.

And if, Templar,
'Twere not this fear itself! Methinks I know
From out what errors germinates our virtue.
Cherish henceforth that virtue, and with me
Those errors shall thee little harm.—Seek Nathan,
As thee he sought, and bring him here. I must
Make you with one another yet agree.—
If thou 'rt in earnest 'bout the girl, be calm;
She 's thine! And Nathan, too, shall find that he
May without swine's-flesh rear a Christian child!—
Go! (*Exit the* TEMPLAR—SITTAH *leaves the sofa.*)

SCENE V.

SITTAH—SALADIN.

SITTAH.

Most strange!

SALADIN.

How say you? Must not my Assad
Have been a valiant and a handsome youth?

SITTAH.

If he were thus, and if 'twas not the Templar
Who for this portrait sat!—But how hast thou
Forgot about his parents to inquire?

SALADIN.

And 'bout his mother more especially?
Whether she in this country e'er had been?—
Mean you not that?

SITTAH.

If that thou couldst but prove!

SALADIN.

O, nothing is more possible! For Assad
To beauteous Christian ladies was so welcome,
To beauteous Christian ladies so devoted,
That once the story went—Well, well; of that
One does not like to speak.—Enough that I
Have him again!—Would him, with all his faults
And all his soft heart's whims, have once again!—
Nathan, in truth, must give the girl to him.
Think'st thou not so?

SITTAH.

Must give? Must let him have?

SALADIN.

O certainly! for, if he's not her father,
What right has Nathan in respect of her?
He who preserved her life enters alone
Into the rights of him who gave her life.

SITTAH.

How, therefore, Saladin, if thou shouldst claim
The girl at once, and her at once withdraw
From him who her illegally possess'd?

SALADIN.

Sittah! is there necessity for that?

SITTAH.

Necessity!—No, not exactly that!—
Mere curiosity alone moves me
To give thee this advice. For I am anxious
As soon as possible to ascertain
Of certain men what maiden they can love.

SALADIN.

Well, then, send thou and fetch her.

SITTAH.

May I, brother?

SALADIN.

Only spare Nathan! He must not believe
That we desire from him with violence
To separate the girl.

SITTAH.

Be not afraid.

SALADIN.

And I must now see where Al-Hafi tarries.

SCENE VI.

The Verandah in Nathan's house near the Palms, as in the first scene of the first Act.—A part of the goods and valuables lies unpacked.

NATHAN—DAJA.

DAJA.

O, 'tis all splendid! 'tis all exquisite!
O, 'tis all—such as only you can give.
Where was the silver cloth with golden sprigs
Woven? What did it cost?—That would I call
A bridal dress! No queen could wish a better.

NATHAN.

A bridal dress? Why just a bridal dress?

DAJA.

Ah, well! on that you thought not when you bought it.
In truth, that and none other must it be!
It seems as destined for a bridal dress—
In the white ground, emblem of innocence;
And in the golden streams, which o'er that ground
In all directions wind, emblem of wealth.
Look you, how lovely 'tis!

NATHAN.

Why mock you me?
And of what bridal dress to me do you
So learnedly in allegory speak?—
Are you the bride?

DAJA.

I?

NATHAN.

Who then?

DAJA.

I? Good heavens!

NATHAN.

Who then? Whose bridal dress do you speak of?
All this belongs to you, and to none else.

DAJA.

To me? Is 't meant for me?—Is 't not for Recha?

NATHAN.

What I have brought with me for Recha lies
In other bales. Look sharp, then! Bear you off
Your chattels.

DAJA.

Tempter! No, of all the world
Were they the jewels—them I will not touch,
If you beforehand do not swear to me,
That of this single opportunity,
The like of which Heaven sends not to you twice,
You will make use.

NATHAN.

Make use? Make use of what?
And opportunity? for what?

DAJA.

Feign not
Yourself so much astonish'd!—For, in short,
The Templar loves your Recha; give him her!
And so at once your sin, which I no longer

Can hide, is at an end; and so the girl
Again 'mong Christians comes; becomes again
What she 's in truth; and what she was, again
She is; and you—you 've not, with all the kindness
For which enough we cannot thank you, Nathan,
Heap'd coals of fire alone on your own head.

NATHAN.

There 's the old lyre again!—with a new string,
Which, as I fear, nor sounds in tune nor stops.

DAJA.

How so?

NATHAN.

The Templar I approve. To him
More than to any one on earth I 'd yield
My Recha. But—have now but patience.

DAJA.

Patience?
Patience, is that not *your* old lyre?

NATHAN.

Still patience
For a few days! . . . But see! who yonder comes?
Is 't a Lay-Brother? Ask him what he wants.

DAJA.

What can he want? (*She goes up to him and asks.*)

NATHAN.

Give it him!—ere he begs.—
(*Aside.* Would that I only knew how to come at
The Templar first, without informing him
What of my curiosity 's the cause!
For if I tell it him, and without grounds

Is my suspicion, then I 've quite in vain
Upon the game the father staked.) What is 't?

DAJA.

He wants to speak with you.

NATHAN.

Well, let him come;
Go you meanwhile.

SCENE VII.

The LAY-BROTHER—NATHAN.

NATHAN.

(*Aside.* Too fain would I remain
My Recha's father!—Can I not do so
E'en if I cease so to be call'd?—By her—
By her herself I 'll always so be call'd,
When she perceives how fain I would be so.)
How can I do you service, holy Brother?

LAY-BROTHER.

Not much.—I 'm glad to see you still so well.

NATHAN.

Then you know me?

LAY-BROTHER.

I do; who knows you not?
On many a hand you have impress'd your name;
On mine it has been so for many years.

NATHAN (*feeling for his purse*).

Come, Brother, the impression I 'll refresh.

LAY-BROTHER.

Thanks! That would rob the poor; I'll nothing take.—
If you would but permit me, with *my* name
Your memory to refresh. For I can boast
That I, too, in your hand have something put,
Which was not to be scorn'd.

NATHAN.

Your pardon, Sir!—
I am ashamed . . . Say what?—And take from me
In recompense its value e'en sevenfold.

LAY-BROTHER.

Do listen first of all, how I myself
Have on this very day been put in mind
Of that my pledge to you confided.

NATHAN.

Pledge?
To me confided?

LAY-BROTHER.

A short time ago,
At Quarantana, nigh to Jericho,
I as a hermit settled. Thither came
A band of Arab robbers, who broke up
My oratory and my cell; and me
They carried off. I by good luck escaped,
And hither to the Patriarch I fled, that I
Might at his hands another place entreat,
Where I might serve in solitude my God
E'en to my blessèd end.

NATHAN.

Brother, I stand

On tenter-hooks. Cut short your story, then.
The pledge! The pledge by you to me confided!

LAY-BROTHER.

Nathan! immediately.—Well, the Patriarch
On Tabor promised me a hermitage
As soon as one was vacant; and, meanwhile,
As a Lay-Brother me into the convent
Invited. There I'm now; and I desire
A hundred times a day to be on Tabor.
For in all kinds of ways, which sicken me,
The Patriarch uses me. Thus, for example:—

NATHAN.

To the point, I beg of you!

LAY-BROTHER.

Well, it's coming!—
Some one to-day has whisper'd in his ears,
That hereabouts there lives a Jew, who has
A Christian child brought up as his own daughter.

NATHAN (*startled*).

How?—

LAY-BROTHER.

Nay, but hear me out!—He charges me
Straightway if possible to trace this Jew;
He's much incensed against such wickedness,
Which in his eyes as nothing less appears
Than the true sin against the Holy Ghost:
That is the sin which amongst us is reckon'd
The greatest of all sins; though, God be praised,
We know not rightly wherein it consists.—
Then wakes at once my conscience up; to me

It then occurs, that I long, long ago
To this unpardonable and great sin
Had given occasion.—Say: did not a groom,
Some eighteen years ago, bring to your house
A little girl only a few weeks old?

NATHAN.

How 's that?—Ah, well, indeed . . . Yes, certainly . . .

LAY-BROTHER.

Then look me in the face!—That groom am I!

NATHAN.

Are you that groom?

LAY-BROTHER.

My master—he from whom
To you I brought the child—was—if I 'm right—
A Lord of Filneck—Wolf of Filneck.

NATHAN.

Right!

LAY-BROTHER.

The mother a short time before had died,
The father suddenly must bend his way—
I think, to Gaza—and the little thing
Could not him follow thither; so he sent it
To you. Did I not with it at Darun
Find you?

NATHAN.

You 're right!

LAY-BROTHER.

It were no wonder if
My memory should deceive me, for I've had
Many good masters; and this one I had

But for a short time served. Soon after that
He fell at Ascalon; and he, in truth,
Was to me a kind master.

NATHAN.

Yes! O yes!
To whom I owe so much—so much of thanks!—
Who more than once me rescued from the sword!

LAY-BROTHER.

O, excellent! Therefore his little girl
More readily on that account you took.

NATHAN.

Well may you think so.

LAY-BROTHER.

Well, where is she now?
She is not dead? Would that she be not dead!—
If no one else about the matter knows,
There's nought to fear from it.

NATHAN.

Is that the case?

LAY-BROTHER.

Trust to me, Nathan, look you, thus I think:
If, on the good that I propose to do,
There borders all too near something that's bad,
Then not to do the good I would prefer;
Because the bad somewhat reliably
We know indeed, but far less know the good.—
'Twas natural, indeed, that if by you
The Christian's daughter was to be brought up,
She should as your own daughter be brought up.—
That with all love and faithfulness you've done,

And therefore must you be rewarded thus?
That I cannot conceive. For you, in truth,
More prudently had acted, if you had
Her as a Christian through a second hand
Allow'd to be brought up; but in that case
You your friend's child would not have so much loved.
Children need love—if but of a wild beast—
More at their age than Christianity;
For Christianity there 's still aye time.
If healthy and affectionate the girl
Before your eyes has grown, then she remains,
Before God's eyes, just what she was before.
Is not the whole of Christianity
Based on the Jewish faith? Oft has it vex'd me,
Cost me tears enough, when Christians forget
That our Lord Jesus was himself a Jew.

NATHAN.

You must, good Brother, be my advocate,
If hatred and hypocrisy should rise
'Gainst me—for a deed's sake—for a deed's sake!—
You—only you shall know it!—To the grave
Take it with you! Ne'er yet has vanity
Tempted me to reveal it to another.
To you alone I tell it. It I tell
But to devout simplicity; for it
Alone can understand what deeds a man
To God devoted can perform.

LAY-BROTHER.

You 're moved;
Your eyes are fill'd with tears?

NATHAN.

You at Darun
With the child found me. But you do not know
That a few days before, in Gath, the Christians
Had murder'd all the Jews, their wives, and children;
You know not that 'mongst them were found my wife
And our seven sons so promising, who all
Were burnt together in my brother's house,
To which for refuge I had them despatch'd.

LAY-BROTHER.

All-righteous God!

NATHAN.

When you arrived, three days
And nights in dust and ashes I had lain
Before my God and wept.—Wept? And besides
With God had argued, had been angry, raged,
Had cursed myself and all the world, and sworn
Hatred the most implacable against
The Christian faith—

LAY-BROTHER.

Ah! I believe you well!

NATHAN.

But then came Reason by degrees again.
She said in milder accents: 'Yet 'tis God!
'Twas God's decree! Well, come and practise
What thou hast comprehended long ago:
To practise which is surely not more hard
Than it to comprehend, if thou but will'st.
Rise up.' I rose and cried to God: 'I will!
If thou but willest, I should will!'—Meanwhile

You from your horse dismounted, and to me
Handed the child envelop'd in your cloak.—
What you at that time said to me, what I
To you, I have forgot. This much I know:
I took the child, and bore it to my bed,
Kiss'd it, then threw myself upon my knees,
And sobb'd forth thus: 'O God! thou for the seven
Hast now already given me one again!'

LAY-BROTHER.

Nathan! you are a Christian!—Yes, by Heavens!
You are a Christian! better never was!

NATHAN.

Heaven bless us both! For what to you makes me
A Christian, *that* to me makes you a Jew!—
Let us no more only emotion raise
In one another. Here there 's need of action!
And although sevenfold love did bind me soon
To this one stranger girl; although the thought
Already kills me, that in her anew
I my seven sons shall lose;—if Providence
Again demands her from me,—I obey.

LAY-BROTHER.

Now 'tis accomplish'd!—Even such a course
As I 'd bethought me I 'd advise you to,
That your good spirit had to you advised!

NATHAN.

Only, the first to claim her must not seek
To tear her from me!

LAY-BROTHER.

No, most surely not!

NATHAN.

Who has no greater rights in her than I,
Must have, at least, those prior claims . . .

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, truly!

NATHAN.

Which blood and nature give him.

LAY-BROTHER.

So think I!

NATHAN.

Name, then, to me the man who is to her
Related as a brother, as an uncle,
As cousin, or as otherwise of kin:
From him I 'll not withhold *her* who was made
And was brought up to be of every house,
Of every faith, an ornament.—I hope
That of your master and his family
You know more than I know myself.

LAY-BROTHER.

That scarcely,
My good Nathan! for you 've already heard
That I was with him but for a short time.

NATHAN.

Know you not, then, at least, what family
The mother was of?—Was she not a Stauffen?

LAY-BROTHER.

That is quite possible!—Methinks she was.

NATHAN.

Was not her brother call'd Conrad of Stauffen?
Was he a Templar?

LAY-BROTHER.

Yes, if I 'm not wrong.—
Stay! It occurs to me that I still have
A little book, which my late master own'd;
I took it from his breast at Ascalon,
Where him we buried.

NATHAN.

Well?

LAY-BROTHER.

It prayers contains.
A breviary, we call it.—That, thought I,
A Christian still might use. Not I, indeed:
I cannot read—

NATHAN.

That 's of no consequence!—
But to the point.

LAY-BROTHER.

There, in that little book—
So far as I 've myself been told—all through
Stand, written in my master's hand, the names
Of those related both to him and her.

NATHAN.

O welcome news! Go! run! Fetch me that book!
Quick! I am ready it with gold to prize;
And with a thousand thanks besides! Haste! run!

LAY-BROTHER.

Right willingly! Yet 'twas in Arabic,
What he—my master—wrote therein. [*Exit.*

NATHAN.

No matter!

Only haste hither! God! could I but keep
The girl, and could I for myself thus gain
A son-in-law like him!—It scarce can happen!—
Ah, well! let it fall out as e'en it will!—
But who can it have been who to the Patriarch
Such information gave? That to inquire
Yet must I not forget. Could it be Daja?

SCENE VIII.

DAJA—NATHAN.

DAJA (*in haste and agitated*).
Only think, Nathan!

NATHAN.
Well, Daja?

DAJA.
The poor child
Is greatly frighten'd, and on this account:
There sends . . .

NATHAN.
The Patriarch?

DAJA.
No; the Sultan's sister,
The Princess Sittah . . .

NATHAN.
Not the Patriarch?

DAJA.
No;

'Tis Sittah !—Don't you hear?—The Princess Sittah
Has sent to summon her.

NATHAN.

Whom, say you? Recha?—
Sittah sends for her?—Well, if it be Sittah,
And not the Patriarch . . .

DAJA.

How come you, then,
To think of him?

NATHAN.

Have you heard nought from him
Of late? And are you sure that you have nought
Of secret information given to him?

DAJA.

I? and to him?

NATHAN.

Where are the messengers?

DAJA.

Before the house.

NATHAN.

From motives of precaution
I 'll speak to them. Come !—If of the Patriarch
There be but nought behind. [*Exit.*

DAJA.

But as for me—
Something entirely different I fear'd.—
How stands the matter? For a Mussulman
So rich a Jew's sole daughter—so reputed—
Were not amiss. The Templar's chance is gone,
If I don't venture on the second step,

And to herself discover who she is!—
Courage! let me for that use the first moment
Which quite alone with her I chance to have!
And that will be—perhaps just now, if I
Shall her accompany.—Upon the way,
At least, no harm can the first hint effect.
Yes, yes! Go on! 'Tis now or never!—On! [*Exit.*

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Room in Saladin's Palace into which the money-bags were carried, and which are still to be seen there.

SALADIN—*and soon afterwards several* MAMELUKES.

SALADIN (*as he enters*).

There stands the money still! and where to find
The Dervish, no one knows; he probably
Is somewhere brooding over a chess-board,
Which makes him oft forgetful of himself;—
Why not of me?—Well, patience! . . . (*to Mameluke*)
What's the matter?

FIRST MAMELUKE.

Welcome intelligence! Joy, Sultan, joy!
From Cairo has arrived the caravan;
'Tis safely here! with seven years' tribute drawn
From the rich Nile.

SALADIN.

Ah! bravo, Ibrahim!

You are in truth a welcome messenger!—
At last! at last!—My thanks for this good news!

FIRST MAMELUKE (*lingering*).

(*Aside.* Well, nothing else?)

SALADIN.

Why wait you? You may go.

FIRST MAMELUKE.

Besides thy welcome, nothing else?

SALADIN.

What else?

FIRST MAMELUKE.

What! No reward for the good messenger?—
So were I, then, the first whom Saladin
At last had learnt to pay with words!—who first
Could boast the Sultan play'd with him the niggard.

SALADIN.

One of these bags then take.

FIRST MAMELUKE.

O no, not now,
Though now to me you wish'd to give them all.

SALADIN.

Bold fellow!—Come you here!—There, take then two.—
Is he in earnest? Does he go away?
Does he beat me in generosity?
For surely to refuse must be for him
Much harder than it is for me to give.—
Hey, Ibrahim!—How enters it my thoughts,
So shortly 'fore my death to wish to be
Something quite different from my former self?

If I choose not as Saladin to die—
Then should I not as Saladin have lived!

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Well, Sultan, I . . .

SALADIN.

If to announce you've come . . .

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That now the transport out of Egypt's here!

SALADIN.

That I already know.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

I've come too late?

SALADIN.

Wherefore too late? Here, take for your good-will,
Of these bags one or two.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Does that mean three?

SALADIN.

Yes, if you can thus reckon. Take them, then.

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Yet, Sultan, a third Mameluke will come,—
If he can come.

SALADIN.

How so?

SECOND MAMELUKE.

Well, then! perhaps
He broke his neck. Soon as we three were sure
Of the arrival of the transports, each
Gallop'd away. The foremost fell, and so
I pass'd him, and before him reach'd the city,

Where Ibrahim, sly fellow, better knows
The streets.

SALADIN.

Alas for him who fell! My friend,
Ride you at once to meet the fallen man!

SECOND MAMELUKE.

That will I do at once!—And if he lives,
Then of these bags the one-half shall be his.

SALADIN.

What a good noble fellow is this, too!—
Who may not of such Mamelukes make boast?
May I not think that my example help'd
To make them what they are? Perish the thought
That at the last it should be otherwise!

THIRD MAMELUKE.

Sultan . . .

SALADIN.

Is 't you who fell?

THIRD MAMELUKE.

No, I 've to say—
That Emir Mansor, who the caravan
Conducted, is from horseback just dismounting . . .

SALADIN.

Bring him, then! quick!—Ah, he 's already here.

SCENE II.

SALADIN—EMIR MANSOR.

SALADIN.

Right welcome, Emir! What has you befallen?
For, Mansor, you have made us wait you long.

MANSOR.

This letter tells you what disturbances
Thy Abul Kassan had to quell at Thebes,
Ere we dared venture to depart.—The march
Thereafter I, as much as possible,
Have hasten'd.

SALADIN.

I believe you!—And, good Mansor,
Take then at once—you 'll do it willingly?—
Take a fresh escort; and without delay
You must immediately march farther on,
And of these monies take the greater part
Unto my sire at Lebanon.

MANSOR.

Yes, Sultan!
Willingly, most willingly.

SALADIN.

And be sure
Your escort 's not too weak. At Lebanon
All is no longer safe. Have you not heard
The Templars now again are on the move?

Be on your guard!—Come, then! where rests your
troop?
I'll it inspect, and push on all myself.
(*To an attendant.*)
Say that I'll visit Sittah afterwards.

SCENE III.

The Palms before Nathan's House.

The TEMPLAR, *who walks up and down.*

TEMPLAR.

Enter this house? No, surely not.—He will
At length make his appearance! Formerly
They noticed me so soon, so gladly, too!—
It may be, haply, that it comes to pass
That I'll experience this, that he forbids
Me from before his house so frequently
Appearing.—Ha!—I greatly am annoy'd.—
What has embitter'd me so much 'gainst him?—
He said that he'd refuse me nought as yet;
And Saladin the task has undertaken
Of moving him.—How?—Should in me the Christian
Nestle more deeply than in him the Jew?
Who knows himself aright? Wherefore should I
To Nathan grudge the little booty, which
He such an opportunity employ'd
To rescue from the Christians?—No small booty,
In truth, a creature such!—Creature? and whose?

One surely would not say it was the slave's
Who to life's desert strand the mere block floats,
And then runs off, and leaves it to its fate;
Rather the artist's, who the form divine
Has, in the block abandon'd thus, thought out
And fashion'd?—Her true father still remains—
Spite of the Christian sire who her begat—
Remains to all eternity a Jew.—
Were I her simply as a Christian maid
To picture to myself apart from all
That such a Jew could give to her;—
Say, heart,—what in her then would thee so please?
Nothing! or little! Nay, not e'en her smile;—
I 'd look on 't as the soft and beautiful
Contraction of her muscles; and I 'd think
It caused by what's unworthy of the charm
In which it clothes itself upon her lips.
No; it was not her smile!—for lovelier smiles
On witticisms, nonsense, mockery,
On flatterers and on wooers, I 've seen lavish'd!—
Was I by them enchanted? Was the wish
From me elicited that I for life
Might in their sunshine flutter?—Surely not.
With him, then, am I angry, who alone
Gave her this higher value? Wherefore so?—
Did I deserve the mockery with which
I was by Saladin dismiss'd?—That he
Could that believe of me was bad enough!
How paltry, how contemptible must I
To him have seem'd!—And all that for a girl?—

Curd! Curd! that will not do. Turn back! If
Daja
Has but said that which will not stand the test?—
Lo, there he comes at last out of his house,
In conversation deep!—With whom?—With him?—
With my Lay-Brother?—Ha! then certainly
Already he knows all! has been betray'd
Already to the Patriarch!—Ha! What mischief
Have I committed, wrong-head that I am!
That of this passion but a single spark
Should thus prevail to set on fire the brain!
Quickly resolve what's further to be done!—
Here will I turn aside, and wait for them;—
If haply the Lay-Brother may him leave.

SCENE IV.

NATHAN—*The* LAY-BROTHER.

NATHAN (*approaching him*).

Now once again, good Brother, many thanks!

LAY-BROTHER.

To you the same!

NATHAN.

To me? from you? for what?
Is't for my stubbornness that I on you
Press that which you need not? Yea, even if
Yours had but yielded to it, you by force
Would not desire richer than I to be.

LAY-BROTHER.

The book, besides, does not belong to me;
It is the daughter's property, her sole
Paternal heritage.—She still has you.—
God only grant that you may ne'er repent
Of this—that you have done so much for her!

NATHAN.

Can I do so? No; never. Be at ease!

LAY-BROTHER.

Well, well! The Templars and the Patriarchs . . .

NATHAN.

Have ne'er such influence so to injure me,
That I could rue in aught what I have done;
On that be silent!—Are you quite assured
That 'tis the Templar who against me goads
The Patriarch?

LAY-BROTHER.

It can be almost none other.
A Templar spoke shortly before with him,
And what I heard him say sounded like that.

NATHAN.

And yet, at present in Jerusalem
There's but one single Templar. Him I know;
He is my friend, a noble, frank young man!

LAY-BROTHER.

Quite right; it is the same!—Yet what one is,
And what one in this world's compell'd to be,
They do not always tally.

NATHAN.

No, alas!—

Then let him do, whoever he may be,
His worst or best! For with your book, my Brother,
All I 'll defy; and straightway with it go
To Saladin.

LAY-BROTHER.

I wish you much success!
Here, then, I 'll leave you.

NATHAN.

You 've not seen her yet?
Come thou, then, soon, and frequently again.—
O that the Patriarch nought to-day may learn!
What matter? Tell him what you will to-day.

LAY-BROTHER.

Not I. Farewell! [*Exit.*

NATHAN.

Brother, forget us not!
O God! that here beneath heaven's canopy
I may not on the spot fall on my knees!
How does the knot that oft has made me anxious
Unloose itself!—God! what relief for me
That in this world I nothing further have
Which I need hide! and that as free 'fore men
I now can walk as 'fore Thee, who alone
Art not accustom'd judgment of mankind
To form according to their deeds,—which deeds
Are yet so seldom theirs, O God!—

SCENE V.

NATHAN—*The* TEMPLAR, *who approaches him from the side.*

TEMPLAR.

Hold, Nathan!
Take me with you!

NATHAN.

Who calls?—Is 't you, Sir Knight?
Where have you been, that at the Sultan's I
To meet you fail'd?

TEMPLAR.

We must have miss'd each other.
Take it not ill!

NATHAN.

Not I; but Saladin . . .

TEMPLAR.

You had just left . . .

NATHAN.

You spoke with him? Ah, well,
Then it 's all right.

TEMPLAR.

Yet he desires to speak
With both of us at once.

NATHAN.

So much the better.
Come, then, with me, I 'm on my way to him.—

TEMPLAR.

May I dare ask who has just left you, Nathan?

NATHAN.

Know you him not?

TEMPLAR.

Was it not that good fellow,
The Lay-Brother, whose services the Patriarch
As a bloodhound uses so readily?

NATHAN.

It may be so! for with the Patriarch
He certainly resides.

TEMPLAR.

The stroke's not bad:
'Fore knavery to send simplicity.

NATHAN.

Stupid simplicity;—not piety.

TEMPLAR.

In piety no Patriarch believes.

NATHAN.

For the Lay-Brother I will vouch. He'll not
The Patriarch help to do what is not right.

TEMPLAR.

He so pretends, at least.—Yet has he said
Nothing to you of me?

NATHAN.

Of you? Of you
Nothing by name.—He scarcely knows your name!

TEMPLAR.

Scarcely.

NATHAN.

He of a Templar spoke, indeed . . .

TEMPLAR.

And what said he?

NATHAN.

In which he once for all
Cannot mean you.

TEMPLAR.

Who knows? Yet let me hear.

NATHAN.

That to the Patriarch one had me accused . . .

TEMPLAR.

Had accused you? That, by his leave, is false.—
Yet hear me, Nathan!—I am not the man
Who anything am able to deny.
What I have done, I've done! I am not here
All that I've done as well done to defend.
Why of an error should I be ashamed?
Am not I firmly purposed to repair it?
And know I not, perchance, how far a man
Who wills it may accomplish that? Hear, Nathan!
I'm the Lay-Brother's Templar certainly,
Who has inform'd against you.—You know well
What made me vex'd!—what caused my blood to boil
In all my veins! Fool that I was—I came
Body and soul into your arms myself
To throw. How you received me then!—How cold!
Yea, how lukewarm—for lukewarm is than cold

Still worse; in what a measured way you studied
How to elude me; with what air-drawn questions
You seem'd as if to me you answer gave:
That dare I scarcely now think on again
If I 'd remain composed.—Yet hear me, Nathan!—
While I in such a ferment was, 'twas then
That Daja, slinking after me, abruptly
Her secret blurted out, which seem'd to me
Of your mysterious conduct to contain
The key.

NATHAN.

How so?

TEMPLAR.

Nay, Nathan, hear me out!—
I to myself imagined that you wish'd,
What from the Christians you had rescued—*that*
Not to a Christian willingly again
To lose.—And so into my mind it came
That I without delay, and rightly, too,
Should put you in the greatest terror, Nathan!

NATHAN.

Without delay? 'And rightly, too?—How rightly?

TEMPLAR.

Hear me, Nathan!—I certainly did wrong!—
You are not guilty.—Silly Daja knows not
What 'tis she says—she hates you—only seeks
Thus to involve you in an awkward scrape—
It may be so, it may be so!—I am
A youthful coxcomb, who in fancy riot;
Sometimes I far too much, at other times

I far too little do.—That, too, can be!
Pardon me, Nathan!

NATHAN.

If you thus, indeed,
Conceive of me . . .

TEMPLAR.

In short, I to the Patriarch
Went!—But I named you not. That, as I 've said,
Is false!—I, but in quite a general way,
Detail'd the case, that I might ascertain
What his opinion was.—This, too, I might
Have left undone; ah yes!—for knew I not
The Patriarch already as a knave?
Could I not you yourself at once have question'd?
Why must I the poor girl have so to risk
Exposed—the risk of losing such a father?—
What follow'd then?—The Patriarch's knavery,
Which ever is consistent with itself,
At the next step me to myself restored.—
Then hear me, Nathan; only hear me out!—
Granted he knew your name: what more, what more?
He can but take the girl from you, if she
Is nobody's but yours.—He from your house
Can to a convent drag her.—Give me her!
O, give her but to me; then let him come;
He 'll hesitate before he takes my wife.—
Give her to me; quickly!—Be she your daughter,
Or be she not! Be she a Christian girl,
Jewess,—or neither! It is all the same!
'Tis all the same to me! In my whole life,

Nor now nor ever shall I question you
On that account—let it be what it may!

NATHAN.

Dream you that to conceal the truth for me
Is necessary?

TEMPLAR.

Be it what it may!

NATHAN.

Neither to you, nor any other, who
'Tis fitting should be told, have I denied
That she 's a Christian, that to me she is
Nought but my foster-daughter. Why not yet
Have I unfolded that to her? I need
Regarding that only to her myself
Excuse.

TEMPLAR.

That ought you not to need with her.—
Grant, then, to her that she with other eyes
May ne'er look on you! This discovery
Do you yet spare her!—You, and you alone
Have the disposal of her; give me her!
'Tis I alone that for the second time
Can save her, and I will.

NATHAN.

It might have been!
It might have been! But now it is too late.

TEMPLAR.

How so? Too late?

NATHAN.

Thanks to the Patriarch . . .

TEMPLAR.

Thanks to the Patriarch? Thanks to him? For what?
Thanks at our hands does he deserve? For what?

NATHAN.

That now we know to whom she is of kin:
Now know into whose hands she can with safety
Be deliver'd.

TEMPLAR.

For that let him give thanks
Who may more cause to thank him have.

NATHAN.

You must
From those hands take her now, and not from mine.

TEMPLAR.

What, Recha, will befall thee? What were joy
For other orphans will be none for thee,
Poor Recha! Where are they, these relatives?

NATHAN.

Where?

TEMPLAR.

And who are they?

NATHAN.

In particular
A brother has turn'd up, to whom for her
You now must sue.

TEMPLAR.

A brother? What is he?
This brother, what is he? A soldier, Nathan?

Or an ecclesiastic? Let me hear
What I dare promise to myself.

NATHAN.

I think—
Neither of these—or both he is. Not rightly
I know him yet.

TEMPLAR.

What else?

NATHAN.

He's a good man!
Who Recha well will treat.

TEMPLAR.

And yet a Christian?
At times I'm at a loss to know what I
Should think of you:—Nathan, be not displeased!
Will she 'mong Christians not be forced to play
The Christian? Will she not at last become
What long enough she play'd? And the pure wheat,
Which you have sown,—will not the weeds at last
Choke it?—And you does that so little vex?—
And spite of that can you—can *you* declare
That by her brother she'll be treated well?

NATHAN.

I think so! hope so!—And if aught for her
With him should wanting be, then has she not
You and me always?

TEMPLAR.

What for her with him
Can wanting be? For will not the fond brother
Richly enough provide for his dear sister,

Her food and dress, dainties and ornaments?
And what more, then, does his loved sister need?—
Ah, truly: still a husband!—Well, e'en that
Will the fond brother in due time provide,
Where'er he 's to be found! And the more Christian
The better!—What an angel you have form'd,
Whom for you, Nathan, others will so mar!

NATHAN.

No need of such foreboding! Of our love
Worthy enough he 'll ever prove himself.

TEMPLAR.

Nay, say not that! Of *my* love say not that!
For it lets nought be ta'en away from it—
Nought, be it e'er so small!—not e'en a name!—
But, Nathan, stay! does she as yet suspect
What 's happening to her now?

NATHAN.

'Tis possible;
Although I know not whence the knowledge comes.

TEMPLAR.

It matters not! In either case she ought—
She must from me first hear her threaten'd fate.
My purpose her—till mine I can her call—
Neither to see nor speak to, comes to nought.
I haste . . .

NATHAN.

Stay! whither?

TEMPLAR.

Unto her, to see
If in this maiden's soul there's pluck enough

To make her take the only resolution
Which of her worthy were!

NATHAN.

What resolution?

TEMPLAR.

'Tis this: that she 'bout you and 'bout her brother
Shall ask no further . . .

NATHAN.

And?

TEMPLAR.

And follow me:—
E'en if she of a Mussulman the wife
In doing so become.

NATHAN.

Stay! you 'll not find her;
For with the Sultan's sister she now is.

TEMPLAR.

Since when? and why?

NATHAN.

And if with them the brother
You 'd meet immediately, then come with me.

TEMPLAR.

The brother? Whose? Is 't Sittah's or is 't Recha's?

NATHAN.

It may be both! Come! I entreat you, come!

(*He leads him out.*)

SCENE VI.

In Sittah's Harem.

SITTAH *and* RECHA *engaged in conversation.*

SITTAH.

How happy am I not with thee, sweet girl!
Be not so sad! so anxious! so afraid!—
Be cheerful! chatty! confidential!

RECHA.

Princess . . .

SITTAH.

Not so! not princess! Call me Sittah,—
Thy friend, thy sister. Call me thy fond mother!—
That I might almost be!—So young! so prudent!
So innocent! What all know'st thou? What all
Must thou have read!

RECHA.

Have read? Ah, surely, Sittah,
Thou mock'st thy silly little sister.—I
Can scarcely read.

SITTAH.

Thou false one, scarcely read!

RECHA.

My father's hand a little! But I thought
You spoke of books.

SITTAH.

Yes, certainly of books!

RECHA.

Well, for me books are truly hard to read!

SITTAH.

Art thou in earnest?

RECHA.

Yes, in earnest quite.
My father cold book-lore, which with dead signs
Only upon the brain impression makes,
Too little loves.

SITTAH.

What say'st thou?—He's not wrong!—
And so much as thou know'st? . . .

RECHA.

I only know
From out my father's mouth, and I could tell
Regarding most of it, how, where, and why
He taught me it.

SITTAH.

Thus better will it stick;
For in this way the whole soul learns at once.

RECHA.

Then surely you little or nought have read!

SITTAH.

How so?—I 'm of the opposite not proud!—
How? State thy grounds! Boldly speak out thy grounds!

RECHA.

You are so simple, just, and unaffected . . .
And so completely like yourself alone . . .

SITTAH.

Well?

RECHA.

'Tis but seldom that books leave us so:
So says my father.

SITTAH.

O what a man, Recha,
Thy father is!

RECHA.

Is it not true?

SITTAH.

How near
He always hits the mark!

RECHA.

Is it not true?—
And this father—

SITTAH.

What ails thee, love?

RECHA.

This father—

SITTAH.

My God! Thou weep'st?

RECHA.

This father—It must out!
My heart wants vent—wants vent . . .
(*Throws herself overwhelm'd in tears at her feet.*)

SITTAH.

Recha, my child,
What aileth thee?

RECHA.

This father—I must lose!

SITTAH.

Thou? lose? lose him?—How's that?—Be calm!—
No, never!
Rise up!

RECHA.

And thou shalt not in vain have offer'd
To be my friend, my sister!

SITTAH.

That I am!
I am!—Nay, rise! else must I call for help.

RECHA (*rises, having regain'd her composure*).

O pardon me! forgive me!—for my grief
Has caused me to forget who thou art, Sittah!
Before thee whining and despair avail not.
Cold, quiet reason will alone with thee
All-powerful prove. Whose cause it pleads with thee,
They are the conquerors!

SITTAH.

Well, then?

RECHA.

O no;
My friend, my sister, O consent thou not!
O ne'er consent that there on me be thrust
Another father!

SITTAH.

Another father? thrust?
On thee? Who can do that? Who can e'en wish it?

RECHA.

Who? My good, wicked Daja it can wish—
And will effect it.—Yes; know'st thou not well
This good, this wicked Daja? Well, may God
Forgive her!—and reward her! For to me
She so much good has shown—and so much evil.

SITTAH.

Evil to thee?—Then she must have, in truth,
Little of good.

RECHA.

O, much! O, very much!

SITTAH.

Who is she?

RECHA.

She 's a Christian, who my childhood
Nursed; who so nursed me!—thou believest not!—
That she a mother let me miss so little.
May God repay her!—Yet 'tis she who thus
Has troubled—tortured me!

SITTAH.

And about what?
Why? and how, Recha?

RECHA.

The poor woman is
A Christian—who for love must torture me;—
One of those fanatics who dream that they
The universal and alone true road
To God do know!—

SITTAH.

Now thee I understand!

RECHA.

And feel themselves constrain'd to guide to it
Each one who may have miss'd it.—Otherwise
Scarce can they act. For if it be the truth
That this way only 'tis which leads aright,
How can they let themselves behold their friends
Wandering on any other—on a road
That plunges them in ruin, and for aye?
If otherwise they did, 'twere the same man
At one and the same time to love and hate.—
But 'tis not that which me compels at length
'Gainst her to utter loud complaints. Her groans,
Her warnings, prayers, and threatenings I
Yet longer would have willingly endured;
Yea, willingly! Yet this to me brought thoughts
Both good and useful, too. And whom, in truth,
Flatters it not, to feel that one is held—
By whomsoe'er it be—so dear, so precious,
That they're unable to abide the thought
Of losing us at once for evermore?

SITTAH.

That is most true!

RECHA.

But—but—that goes too far!
To it I nothing can oppose; not patience,
Not consideration; nought.

SITTAH.

What? to what?

RECHA.

What, even now, Daja reveal'd to me.

SITTAH.

Reveal'd? And even now?

RECHA.

But even now!
On the way here, a Christian church in ruins
We near'd. When suddenly she stopp'd, and seem'd
To struggle with herself; and with moist eyes
She look'd now up to heaven, and now on me.
At length she said: Come, let us through this church
Take the short way! She goes; I follow her;
Mine eye with dread strays through the tott'ring ruins.
Again she stops; I find myself with her
Close to a broken altar's sunken steps.
How did I feel, when with hot tears she fell,
Wringing her hands, down at my feet!

SITTAH.

Good child!—

RECHA.

And she conjured me by that Holy Virgin
Who there before so many prayers had heard,
And wrought so many miracles;—conjured me,
With looks of true compassion, on myself
Pity to have!—at least her to forgive,
If she to me must now reveal the claims
Which her church had on me.

SITTAH.

(*Aside.* Unhappy one!—
My heart foreboded that.)

RECHA.

That I by blood

A Christian am; baptized; not Nathan's daughter;
That he is not my father! O my God!
That he is not my father! Me behold
At thy feet once again . . .

SITTAH.

Recha, not so!
Rise up!—my brother comes! rise up!

Scene VII.

Saladin—Sittah—Recha.

SALADIN.

Ah, Sittah!
What is the matter here?

SITTAH.

Heavens! She's unconscious!

SALADIN.

Who is't?

SITTAH.

Thou knowest her . . .

SALADIN.

Our Nathan's daughter?
What aileth her?

SITTAH.

Come to thyself, my child!—
The Sultan . . .

RECHA (*who drags herself on her knees to Saladin's feet, her head sunk to the ground*).

I'll not rise! never until . . .

I may not on the Sultan's countenance look!—
I may not in his eyes and on his brow
Admire the glance of justice and of goodness—
Admire until . . .

SITTAH.

Rise up!—rise up!—

RECHA.

Until
To me he promises . . .

SALADIN.

Come! It I'll promise . . .
Be it what it will!

RECHA.

Nothing more, nor less,
Than that my father should be left to me;
And I to him!—I know not yet who else
Wishes to be my father,—or can wish.
I have no wish to know it. But does blood
Then only make the father? only blood?

SALADIN (*raising her up*).

I mark you well!—Who could so cruel be
As such things in your head to put? Is't then
Made out so fully?—Is it proved?

RECHA.

Ah, yes!
It must be so! For Daja by my nurse
Was so inform'd.

SALADIN.

Thy nurse?

RECHA.

Who on her death-bed
Felt herself bound it to confide to her.

SALADIN.

Her death-bed!—Talk'd she not deliriously?—
And is it true?—Ah yes; the blood alone
The father does not constitute by far!
Scarce makes the father of a beast! At most
It gives the first right to acquire that name!—
Be not afraid!—And know'st thou what? Soon as
Two fathers shall contend for thee—leave both;
And take a third!—me for thy father take!

SITTAH.

Do so! do so!

SALADIN.

I 'll a good father be,
A right good father!—Stay! for something better
Occurs to me.—What need especially
Of fathers? What if they should die? Betimes,
Look round for one whose age shall vie with thine!
Know'st thou none such? . . .

SITTAH.

Nay, do not make her blush!

SALADIN.

Sittah! that was my purpose certainly.
Blushing makes ugliness so beautiful:
Shall it not still more beautiful make beauty?
Thy father Nathan hither have I summon'd,
And yet another. Who 'tis dost thou guess?—
Come hither!—Sittah, thou 'lt to me permit?—

SITTAH.

Brother!

SALADIN.

That thou before him, my dear girl,
Shalt blush!

RECHA.

'Fore whom? blush? . . .

SALADIN.

Little hypocrite!
Then rather grow thou pale! E'en as thou wilt,
And canst!

(*A female slave enters, and approaches Sittah.*)

And are they not already come?

SITTAH.

Well! let them enter.—Brother, they are here!

SCENE VIII., *and last.*

NATHAN—*The* TEMPLAR—SALADIN—SITTAH—RECHA.

SALADIN.

Welcome, my dear good friends! To thee—thee, Nathan,
I first of all must say, that now thou canst
Soon as thou pleasest fetch again thy gold!

NATHAN.

Sultan! . . .

SALADIN.

And now I 'm at thy service .

NATHAN.

Sultan ! .

SALADIN.

The caravan 's arrived. I am again
So rich as I 've not been for a long time.—
Come, tell me what thou need'st to undertake
Some venture great ! For e'en you men of trade
Of ready money can ne'er have too much !

NATHAN.

And wherefore of this trifle first ?—I there
An eye behold in tears,—which tears to dry
Is for me more important.—(*Goes up to Recha.*) Thou hast wept.
What aileth thee ?—Art thou my daughter still ?

RECHA.

Father ! . . .

NATHAN.

We one another understand.
Enough !—Be thou more cheerful ! be composed !
If thy heart still as yet be only thine !
And if by no loss else thy heart be threaten'd !—
Thy father is not lost to thee !

RECHA.

None else !

TEMPLAR.

None else ?—Ah ! well, then, I 've deceived myself.
What one fears not to lose, *that* to possess
One never has believed, and never wish'd.—
'Tis well, 'tis well !—That, Nathan, alters all !

Sultan, we came at thy behest.—I only
Had thee misled; take thou no further pains!

SALADIN.

How hasty now again, young man!—Shall all
Then yield to thee? all guess thy meaning?

TEMPLAR.

Well!
Sultan, thou hear'st! thou seest!

SALADIN.

Ah, yes, in truth!—
'Tis bad enough, that of thy business thou
Wert not more certain!

TEMPLAR.

But I am so now.

SALADIN.

He who in any way so spurns a kindness,
Recalls it. That which thou hast saved is not
Therefore thy property. Else were the robber,
Whom lust of gain impels into the fire,
A hero good as thou!
(*Going up to Recha in order to lead her to the Templar.*)
Come, then, dear girl!
Not so punctilious be with him. For if
He different were, were he less hot and proud,
He 'd have declined the task of saving thee.
In reckoning with him—one thing with another
Thou must e'en take.—Come! shame him, and do thou
What it befitted him to do!—thy love
To him confess! offer thyself to him!
If he disdains thee—if he should forget

How in this step thou infinitely more
For him hast done than he for thee . . . But what
Has he then done for thee? Been smoked a little?
But that's not much!—else of my brother Assad
He shows no trace—bears but his outward semblance,
Not his heart. Come, love . . .

SITTAH.

Go! go! love, go!
'Tis for thy gratitude still but a little;
Still but nothing.

NATHAN.

Hold, Saladin! hold, Sittah!

SALADIN.

Thou too?

NATHAN.

There is one here that yet must speak.

SALADIN.

Who 'll that deny?—Nathan, undoubtedly
A foster-father's voice claims to be heard—
First, if you will.—Thou hearest, that I know
The whole position of the case?

NATHAN.

Not quite!—
I speak not of myself. There is another;
A very different person from myself,
Whom, Sultan, I entreat you first to hear.

SALADIN.

Whom do you mean?

NATHAN.

Her brother.

SALADIN.

Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

Yes.

RECHA.

My brother? O, have I then a brother?

TEMPLAR (*wildly distracted*).

Where? where is he — this brother? not yet here?
I was to meet him here.

NATHAN.

Only have patience!

TEMPLAR (*very bitterly*).

He has imposed on her a father: now
Will he not find for her a brother?

SALADIN.

That
Was wanting! Christian, ne'er from Assad's lips
Such mean suspicion would have come.—Go on!

NATHAN.

Forgive him! I forgive him willingly.—
Who knows what in his place, and at his age,
We might ourselves have thought?
(*Going up to him in a friendly manner.*)
'Tis natural,
Sir Knight, that on mistrust suspicion follows.
Had you to me at first your real name
Vouchsafed . . .

TEMPLAR.

How? what?

NATHAN.

Sir Knight, you are no Stauffen!

TEMPLAR.

Who am I, then?

NATHAN.

Your name 's not Curd von Stauffen!

TEMPLAR.

What then 's my name?

NATHAN.

'Tis Lionel von Filneck.

TEMPLAR.

How?

NATHAN.

You 're surprised?

TEMPLAR.

And justly!—Who says that?

NATHAN.

I, who can tell you more, still more. Meanwhile
I still accuse you not of falsehood.

TEMPLAR.

No?

NATHAN.

Yet haply the name Stauffen, too, belongs
To you.

TEMPLAR.

That think I too. (*Aside.* God prompted that.)

NATHAN.

For your mother was a Stauffen. Her brother,
Your uncle, he who brought you up, to whom
Your parents left you still in Germany,

When, by the inclement climate driven from thence,
They to this country here came back again :—
He, who was Curd von Stauffen call'd, perchance
May have adopted you when still a child.—
Is't long since you with him did hither come?
I hope he 's still alive?

TEMPLAR.

What shall I say?
It is so surely! He himself is dead.
With the last reinforcement of our Order
I came here recently.—But—what, I pray,
With Recha's brother has all this to do?

NATHAN.

Your father was . . .

TEMPLAR.

How?—Him you also knew?

NATHAN.

Your father was my friend.

TEMPLAR.

He was your friend?
Nathan, is 't possible?

NATHAN.

He call'd himself
Wolf von Filneck; but he was not a German . . .

TEMPLAR.

You know that too?

NATHAN.

A German he espoused,—
Follow'd your mother but for a short time
To Germany . . .

TEMPLAR.

No more! I beg of you!
But Recha's brother?

NATHAN.

You are he!

TEMPLAR.

I, Nathan?
I her brother?

RECHA.

He my brother?

SITTAH.

Then they
Brother and sister are!

SALADIN.

Brother and sister!

RECHA.

Ah, my brother!

(*wishes to approach him.*)

TEMPLAR (*steps back*).

Your brother?

RECHA (*stops, and turns to Nathan*).

It cannot be!
It cannot be! His heart knows nought of that!
We are impostors! O my God!

SALADIN (*to the Templar*).

Impostors!
How? Think'st thou that? Canst thou think that? Indeed
Thou 'rt an impostor! All in thee 's a lie;

Face, voice, and gait! Nought thine! And not
To wish to acknowledge such a sister! Go!

TEMPLAR (*approaching the Sultan respectfully*).

Misconstrue not, O Sultan, my surprise!
In a momentous crisis such as this—
In which thou scarce thy Assad ever saw'st—
Mistake not him and me! (*hurrying up to Nathan*).
Nathan, you take
From me, and give to me! both thoroughly.
No!—more you give me than from me you take!
More, infinitely more! (*falling on Recha's neck*).
My own dear sister!

NATHAN.

Blanda von Filneck!

TEMPLAR.

Blanda?—and not Recha?
Your Recha now no longer?—O my God!
Her you disown! restore her Christian name!
Disown her for my sake!—O Nathan! Nathan!
Why let her suffer so?—her?

NATHAN.

What?—My children!
My children!—For is not my daughter's brother
Also my child?—if he shall will it so!—
(*While Nathan gives himself up to their embraces, Saladin with agitated steps goes up to his sister.*)

SALADIN.

What say'st thou, sister?

SITTAH.

I am touch'd . .
O

SALADIN.

And I—
I shudder at the thought of an emotion—
One greater still—that's yet to come!—For it
Prepare thyself as best thou canst.

SITTAH.

How?

SALADIN (*while Nathan advances to Saladin, Sittah goes to the Templar and Recha to show them her sympathy, and Nathan and Saladin speak in a whisper*).

Nathan!
A word with thee! Hear, Nathan! Saidst thou not . . .

NATHAN.

What, Sultan? What? . . .

SALADIN.

That forth from Germany
Her father came not—was not German born?
What, then, was he? Where was he formerly?

NATHAN.

That he himself to me would ne'er confide—
From out his mouth I nothing know of it.

SALADIN.

And was he then no Frank? nor from the West?

NATHAN.

O! that he was not so he did confess.—
Persic he preferr'd to speak . . .

SALADIN.

Persic? Persic?
What want I more?—'Tis he! yes, he it was!

NATHAN.

Who was't?

SALADIN.

My brother! O! most certainly!
Most certainly, my Assad!

NATHAN.

Well! Since thou
Hast hit on that thyself, take in this book
The full assurance (*reaching him the Breviary*).

SALADIN (*opening it eagerly*).

Ah! his hand, his hand!
It, too, I recognise again!

NATHAN.

As yet
They nothing know of it! With thee alone
It rests to say what they should learn of this.

SALADIN (*turning over the leaves*).

What! Shall I not acknowledge them—the children
Of my brother? My nephew—yea, my children?
What! not acknowledge them? leave them to thee?
(*Aloud.*)
They are! Sittah, they are! They are, indeed!
Of my and of thy brother children—both!
(*He runs to embrace them.*)

SITTAH (*following him*).

What hear I? Yet could it be otherwise?

SALADIN (*to the Templar*).

And now, thou stubborn fellow, thou must love me!
And now (*to Recha*) that which I offer'd thee I am!
Whether thou wilt or no!

SITTAH.

I too! I too!

SALADIN (*to the Templar*).

My son! My Assad! Ah, my Assad's son!

TEMPLAR (*falling at his feet*).

I of thy blood?—Then were those dreams with which
They used to rock my childhood—more than dreams.

SALADIN (*raising him*).

Something of this the rascal knew, and yet
He would have made of me his murderer!

(*The curtain falls amidst congratulations on all sides.*)

THE END.

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